



To complete your BDP and earn your certificate, you must write a 3-4 page integration essay that draws together the various parts of your BDP experience. Your essay should be typed and double-spaced. ***Please be sure to include your name, BDP, and strand (if applicable) on your essay.***

Your integration essay is an opportunity to **reflect** on your BDP experience, and it should **tell a compelling story** about your experience and what it demonstrates about who you are as you prepare to graduate. Make a case for **what you've learned** through the program and its value, and for how the various components of your BDP experience—the courses you've taken from different disciplines and the connecting experiences you've pursued—**come together** to form a whole picture that is more than the sum of its parts.

Integrating Your BDP Experience

The primary purpose of the integration essay is to integrate, or draw connections among the disparate experiences and disciplinary perspectives that you have brought together through your BDP. Questions to consider as you write your essay include:

- How has your BDP allowed you to make connections across different disciplinary perspectives?
- What issues, problems, or questions related to your BDP topic have you been able to understand more fully by seeing them from multiple perspectives?
- How have your research experiences, internship experiences, and/or creative projects connected to your BDP coursework? What have you learned in your classes that made you a stronger researcher or intern? And conversely, what has this hands-on experience taught you that the coursework could not?
- Has your BDP experience impacted your future career goals? How?
- How has your BDP connected to your major? What have you learned through the BDP that you would have missed if you had not had this experience?

Reflect and Tell Your Story

Writing is not just putting down on paper what you already know; rather, the writing process can be a powerful means of coming to a deeper understanding of what you know and believe. Your integration essay is a piece of reflective writing through which you should come to a more sophisticated understanding of what your BDP experience has taught you.

If you think of your BDP application essay as the first step in a process of defining yourself as an interdisciplinarian, your integration essay is the culmination of this process. Use this essay to reflect on how you've grown and changed through your experiences in the BDP and at UT.

The integration essay is similar to two other kinds of writing you will have to do as you continue in your academic and professional careers: the personal statement you write for graduate school applications, and the cover letter you write for job applications. In all of these genres, you have the challenging task of telling an outsider in a short piece of writing not only what you have accomplished, but also who you are and how you will be a valuable addition to the program or organization. Your integration essay should be able to tell your story as a BDP soon-to-be-graduate to someone who doesn't already know what you have accomplished in your BDP and what those accomplishments tell about you.



Guidelines

1. Your integration essay is due to the BDP office no later than the deadline for applying to graduate from the university in your last semester at UT. (Please consult the BDP web site or office for the actual deadline during your graduation semester. Consult your BDP advisor if you plan to complete certificate requirements post-graduation.) You may upload your essay to the online form you complete to request your BDP certificate, or you may email your essay as a Word or PDF attachment to bdp@austin.utexas.edu.
2. Your essay will be read by the BDP staff and by members of the faculty panel for your BDP. Please keep in mind that the faculty members are part of your audience.
3. If the faculty panel determines that your essay does not reflect the level of knowledge, understanding, or articulation expected for earning the BDP certificate, you will be asked to revise your essay. The integration essay is a requirement for earning your certificate, so please take seriously both your first draft and any revisions you are asked to make.
4. Use examples in your essay to give specificity to your discussion.

We will be reading your essay with the following criteria in mind:

- Essay is well-written.** Both in terms of structure and organization, and at the sentence level, your essay must be clearly and effectively written for the appropriate audience.
- Essay demonstrates disciplinary awareness.** Your essay should refer to disciplines relevant to your BDP focus, referring to questions or issues that might be addressed through a particular discipline and demonstrating understanding of disciplinary perspectives, tools, or methods.
- Essay demonstrates interdisciplinary awareness and ability to think comparatively across disciplines.** Your essay should bring together the perspectives offered by more than one discipline relevant to your BDP focus, demonstrating understanding of the perspectives, methodologies, and knowledge offered by different disciplines related to your subject and showing how awareness of multiple disciplines has helped you to understand the subject in a more sophisticated way.
- Essay demonstrates ability to transfer knowledge and skills from one context to another.** Your essay should articulate how knowledge you have gained in one context has impacted your understanding in another. You might discuss how what you have learned in the classroom has been useful in your hands-on connecting experiences, or you might describe how your connecting experiences have enlarged your understanding of something learned in the classroom.
- Essay demonstrates self-reflection.** Your essay should reflect on how your interests have developed through your BDP and other UT experience, including how your experience has helped you shape or refine your goals for the future, and how your coursework and/or connecting experiences have helped you develop professional skills.
- Essay demonstrates understanding of the BDP subject.** Your essay should discuss issues related to questions, knowledge, or skills relevant to the BDP subject, showing an understanding of what it means to study the BDP topic.