

MAJORS, MINORS, AND CERTIFICATES

Undergraduate Majors

To receive a bachelor's degree, a student must complete the requirements for at least one major. Rice offers majors in many fields. Within some majors, students have the choice of a particular area of concentration. Students also may choose to fulfill the requirements for more than one major; such majors do not necessarily need to be in related fields. Because majors are part of degree programs, students should pay particular attention to the major's corresponding degree. In some instances, the requirements for a major may differ depending on the degree and major combination the student is pursuing. As an example, the major requirements for a Computer Science major pursuing the BA degree differ from those of a Computer Science major pursuing the BSCS degree. When a student formally declares a major, they should declare both the degree and major combination that they are pursuing. The process for declaring majors appears in the [Declaring Majors](#) (p. 1) or [Area Majors](#) (p. 2) sections below.

More detailed information on the academic majors described below may be found in the corresponding school or Programs of Study sections, or by contacting the department. Additional information on degrees and majors, including some maximum total hours limits for majors, can be found at [Degrees: Undergraduate-Level](#) (<https://ga.rice.edu/undergraduate-students/academic-opportunities/degrees/>). Other helpful information on *dual degrees* and *multiple majors* may be found at the [Major, Minors, and University Certificates](#) (https://registrar.rice.edu/students/majors_minors/#dual) page of the Office of the Registrar's website.

School of Architecture

Students admitted to the university as architecture majors must first complete four years of the BA program (architecture major) before applying to the BArch program in their senior year. If admitted, they are assigned a preceptorship with an architectural firm for a one-year period, after which they return to Rice to complete the BArch degree program. The School of Architecture also offers a BA in Architectural Studies, which provides a foundation for graduate-level study of architecture and/or pursuit of other fields. More information on this academic school, its departments and programs can be found at the [School of Architecture](#) (<https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/architecture/>) page.

George R. Brown School of Engineering and Computing

Rice offers majors in bioengineering, chemical and biomolecular engineering, civil and environmental engineering, computational and applied mathematics, computer science, electrical and computer engineering, materials science and nanoengineering, mechanical engineering, operations research, and statistics. These programs lead to either the BA or the BS degree and may qualify students for further graduate study. More information on this academic school, its departments and programs can be found at the [George R. Brown School of Engineering and Computing](#) (<https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/engineering/>) page.

School of Humanities

Students may declare majors in art, art history, classical studies, English, European studies, French studies, German studies, Spanish and

Portuguese, history, philosophy, and religion. Interdisciplinary majors are available in ancient mediterranean civilizations, Asian studies, Latin American and Latinx studies, medieval and early modern studies, and the study of women, gender, and sexuality. More information on this academic school, its departments and programs can be found at the [School of Humanities](#) (<https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/humanities/>) page.

Virani Undergraduate School of Business (at Rice Business)

At the undergraduate level, the Virani Undergraduate School of Business offers students a BA degree with major in business and a major concentration in finance or a major concentration in management. More information on this academic school, its departments and programs can be found at the [Rice Business](#) (<https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/business/>) page.

Shepherd School of Music

Music students may opt for either a BA or a Bachelor of Music (BMus) degree in performance, composition, music history, and music theory. Students who pass a special qualifying examination may elect an honors program that leads to the simultaneous awarding of the BMus and Master of Music (MMus) degrees after five years of study. More information on this academic school, its departments and programs can be found at the [Shepherd School of Music](#) (<https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/music/>) page.

Wiess School of Natural Sciences

All natural sciences departments, including biosciences; chemistry; earth, environmental and planetary sciences; environmental science; kinesiology; mathematics; neuroscience; and physics and astronomy, offer programs leading to the BA degree. BS degrees are offered in some departments. Majors include astronomy; astrophysics; biosciences; chemical physics; chemistry; earth, environmental, and planetary sciences; environmental science; health sciences; mathematics; neuroscience; physics; and sports medicine and exercise physiology. Students also may elect double majors combining one of the programs in natural sciences with another science, a humanities discipline, or an engineering field. More information on this academic school, its departments and programs can be found at the [Wiess School of Natural Sciences](#) (<https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/natural-sciences/>) page.

School of Social Sciences

Rice offers majors in anthropology, economics, linguistics, mathematical economic analysis, political science, psychology, social policy analysis, sociology, sport analytics, and sport management. In addition the cognitive sciences major includes science, engineering, and humanities courses, while the managerial studies major incorporates coursework in the schools of engineering and management. More information on this academic school, its departments and programs can be found at the [School of Social Sciences](#) (<https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/social-sciences/>) page.

Declaring Majors, Minors, and Certificates

Students declare a major, minor, and/or university certificate via a *Declaration of Major (or Minor or University Certificate) Form* found in [ESTHER](#) (<https://esther.rice.edu>). Students should take (or email) the completed form and an unofficial transcript to the appropriate academic major, minor, and/or certificate advisor (as listed on the Office of Academic Advising website (<https://oaa.rice.edu/>)) for approval. The

department will advise the student about the requirements that must be met to complete the major, minor, and/or university certificate and the likelihood the student will be able to meet them. If the department believes a student is not well prepared for success in its major, minor, or university certificate, it may express its reservations on the form and/or propose a specific course of study to help improve the student's background. No department or program, except the School of Architecture and Shepherd School of Music, may refuse to admit an undergraduate into its program unless specific curricular conditions for such refusals are included in the relevant description of the program requirements, or in cases of resource limitations. Students may not obtain multiple undergraduate degrees with the same major (for example, a student may not pursue both a BA and a BS with a major in Chemistry).

Students are encouraged to declare a major as soon as they have decided on it so that a major advisor can be assigned. Students may declare a major at any time up to, before, or during the spring semester of their second year at Rice. They will not be permitted to register for the fall semester of their third year without having declared a major. The major declaration deadline is listed in the *Academic Calendar* (<https://registrar.rice.edu/calendars/>) each year. (Transfer students should declare within their first year or before reaching junior-level status.) Students are always free to change their major by completing the *Change of Major Form*. However, such a change may entail one or more additional semesters at the university. Area majors are an exception to this rule and must be declared by the fourth semester before graduation (see *Area Majors* (p. 2) below).

Majors with Major Concentrations

Some majors provide students an opportunity to declare a major concentration. Major concentrations are formally recognized subfields of study within a major, and they are represented by a coordinated set of courses emphasizing a subfield in that program. For those majors with major concentrations, when the student is completing the *Declaration of Major Form* found in *ESTHER* (<https://esther.rice.edu/>), they will be prompted to identify the major concentration they intend to pursue. As an academic credential, the major concentration is listed on the student's academic transcript as an element of the university's official curriculum.

Majors with Areas of Specialization

Some majors allow for areas of specialization. Areas of specialization are pre-specified collections of elective courses that, when taken together, cover particular areas of specialization within a major, a major concentration, or a minor. These can be viewed as an advising strategy to assist students in choosing electives. An area of specialization is not an academic credential and is not listed on the student's academic transcript.

Declaring a Minor

Students may declare a minor only after they have first declared a major. The declaration of minor process is identical to that of majors, and done via a *Declaration of Minor Form* found in *ESTHER* (<https://esther.rice.edu/>). Students may not major and minor in the same subject (for example, a student may not pursue both a major and minor in History).

Declaring a Certificate

Additionally, students may declare their intent to pursue a university certificate only after they have first declared a major. The declaration of intent to pursue a university certificate process is identical to that of majors, and done via a *Declaration of University Certificate Form* found in *ESTHER* (<https://esther.rice.edu/>).

Advising, Transcripts, and Degree Audit

Once a student declares a major, minor, or certificate, the title of the major, minor, or university certificate is noted on the student's transcript, and a faculty advisor in the appropriate department or program is assigned. To gain full benefit of departmental or program course offerings, students should meet regularly with faculty advisors.

To assess progress toward degree requirements, students should:

1. routinely monitor their Degree Works degree audits (via *ESTHER* (<https://esther.rice.edu/>)) to review progress toward degree requirements; and
2. meet regularly with their faculty advisors to review progress toward completion of major, minor, university certificate, and degree requirements.

For instructions on how to declare a major, minor, or certificate in *ESTHER* (<https://esther.rice.edu/>), visit the *Major, Minors, and University Certificates* (https://registrar.rice.edu/students/majors_minors/) page of the Office of the Registrar's website.

Area Majors

Students with well-defined needs that are not met by established departmental or interdisciplinary majors may propose an area major. Area majors combine courses from more than one department into a cohesive plan of original study that is equivalent in quality and rigor to a traditional major.

Area majors are rare and limited by the available academic resources and must be distinct from other majors at Rice. They differ from double majors, which must conform to the requirements of both departments. An area major constitutes a single major with specific requirements that include courses from two or more departments. No course in an area major may be used to fulfill the requirements of an additional major, minor, or a certificate, and students with area majors must still meet all the other university graduation requirements.

Students initiate an area major after first consulting with faculty advisors from each of the departments involved. Once support has been obtained from these faculty advisors, students should consult the *Office of Academic Advising (OAA)* (<https://oaa.rice.edu/>) which serves as a liaison to the *Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC)* (<https://cuc.rice.edu/>). Students work closely with each faculty advisor to design a comprehensive and substantial course of study and to decide on an appropriate title. This course of study must be formulated in a written proposal. Each faculty advisor and the OAA must sign off on the plan before submission to the chair of the CUC. The CUC determines final approval. As part of the review process, the CUC consults chairs of the involved departments to confirm that courses necessary for successful and timely completion of the major will be offered. If approved, the OAA officially certifies the area major plan to the Office of the Registrar and goes on to oversee the major on behalf of the faculty advisors. Any change in the area major requirements needs the approval of both the faculty advisors and the CUC.

Students may not propose an area major if they are within three semesters of graduation unless the *Committee on Examinations and Standing (EX&S)* (<https://dou.rice.edu/student-resources/academic-petitions-special-requests/committee-examinations-and-standing/>) rules that exceptional circumstances warrant this action. Under no circumstances may students propose an area major in their final semester before graduation.