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 may also 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 BSc 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 or Area Majors 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 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: https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/architecture/

George R. Brown School of Engineering

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, 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: https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/engineering/

School of Humanities

Students may declare majors in art history, classical studies, English, European studies, French studies, German studies, Spanish and Portuguese, history, philosophy, religion, and visual and dramatic arts. Interdisciplinary majors are available in ancient Mediterranean civilizations, Asian studies, Latin American 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: https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/social-sciences/
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 below).

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 approved concentrations, the major concentration is listed on the student’s academic transcript as an element of the official curriculum.

Students may declare a minor only after they have first declared a major. The declaration of minor process is identical to that of majors. Students may not major and minor in the same subject.

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.

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. monitor their Degree Works degree audits (via ESTHER) 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, 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) which serves as a liaison to the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC). 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 rules that exceptional circumstances warrant this action. Under no circumstances may students propose an area major in their final semester before graduation.