

# GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

*The General Announcements (GA) is the official Rice curriculum. In the event that there is a discrepancy between the GA and any other websites or publications, the GA shall prevail as the authoritative source.*

## Degree Requirements for All Bachelor's Degrees

Students are responsible for making certain that their plan of study meets all degree and major (and minor and/or certificate) requirements. To graduate from Rice University, all students must:

- Be registered at Rice University full time for at least four full fall and/or spring semesters.
- Complete the requirements of at least one major and degree program.
- Complete at least 120 semester credit hours (some degree programs require more than a minimum 120 credit hours).
- Complete at least 60 semester credit hours at Rice University.
- Complete at least 48 semester credit hours in upper-level coursework (courses at the 300-level or higher).
- Complete more than half of the upper-level coursework (at least 25 of the 48 minimum semester credit hours) at Rice University.
- Complete more than half of the upper-level coursework required by the declared major(s) at Rice University (as designated by the department or program, some may specify a higher proportion).
- Complete at least 60 semester credit hours outside of major requirements for Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. Exceptions include:
  - Students pursuing the BA degree with a major in architecture must complete at least 45 credit hours outside of major requirements.
  - Students pursuing the BMus (Bachelor of Music) degree, or a BS degree in engineering are not subject to this "outside of major" requirement.
- Complete all Rice coursework with a cumulative grade point average of at least 1.67 or higher.
- Complete all Rice coursework that satisfy major, minor and/or certificate requirements (as designated by the department or program):
  - with a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.00 or higher.
  - with the standard letter grade earned (not on a Pass/Fail basis).
- Satisfy the Writing and Communication Requirement (see below).
- Complete courses to satisfy the Distribution Requirements (see below).
- Complete one Lifetime Physical Activity Program (LPAP) course for one credit. Students with disabilities may make special arrangements to satisfy this requirement.
- Otherwise be a student in good academic and disciplinary standing and not under investigation.

### Please Note:

- No more than 4 hours of credit for LPAP courses may be counted toward graduation.

- No more than 3 hours of credit for student-taught College Courses (COLL) may be counted toward graduation. (This includes all courses COLL 100-COLL 199 as well as the COLL 200 Teaching Practicum.)

In order to earn a second degree, students must fulfill the requirements outlined in the Dual-Degree Requirements section below.

## Writing and Communication Requirement

All students must complete and pass a First-Year Writing-Intensive Seminar (FWIS). An FWIS is a content-based, 3-credit hour seminar open only to first-year students that can focus on any topic, and in which writing and communication pedagogy plays a significant role in assignments and grading. To facilitate success in meeting this requirement, all students must take the Composition Examination prior to matriculating. Students who fail the Composition Exam, or fail to take it, must successfully complete the FWIS 100 *Fundamentals of Academic Communication* course during their first semester, and prior to enrolling in the FWIS course used to meet the graduation requirement. FWIS 100 cannot be used to meet the Writing and Communication (FWIS) graduation requirement.

All first-year students must enroll in and successfully complete an FWIS during their first year at Rice, and all first-year students will be notified prior to Orientation Week if they have been assigned to take an FWIS during the fall or spring of their first year. The following transfer credit restrictions exist for FWIS courses, and this Writing and Communication Requirement:

- Students who matriculate as freshmen may not substitute pre-matriculation transfer credit for the FWIS.
- Transfer students who wish to satisfy the FWIS requirement with courses from another institution must apply for this credit in their first semester at Rice. The course taken at another institution will only be considered for transfer as an equivalent FWIS course i.) with the approval of the Program Director, and ii.) provided that the course transfers in as at least 2.5 semester credit hours.
- Neither freshmen nor transfer students may satisfy the FWIS requirement by taking an equivalent course at another institution after matriculating at Rice.

All FWIS courses carry the FWIS designation and cannot be taken as Pass/Fail. Students are allowed to change FWIS sections during the first two weeks of classes each semester, but they cannot drop one FWIS section without simultaneously adding another. After week two, FWIS courses cannot be dropped. In extraordinary circumstances, students may submit a petition to the Dean of Undergraduates, who may approve a drop on an exception basis.

See the Program in Writing and Communication's web site (<http://pwc.rice.edu>) for FWIS section descriptions and for more information on the required English Composition Exam.

## Distribution Requirements (Groups I / II / III)

Distribution courses introduce the knowledge, intellectual skills and habits of thought characteristic of disciplines or of inquiry across disciplines within three main areas: humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences and engineering. They are broad-based, accessible to non-majors, and provide a foundation that enables students to integrate knowledge from multiple perspectives. No single course is expected to fulfill all the criteria or goals of a distribution group. Courses that

presume students' special expertise or that teach techniques or career-based skills without exposure to modes of analysis and scholarship in the relevant discipline are not eligible for distribution credit. Research or independent study courses and internships and practica are also excluded.

### Group I

These courses, which are broad in theme and scope, prompt students to probe the modes of knowledge, inquiry or creative practice characteristic of the arts and humanities. **Group I** courses provide students with essential knowledge and tools for thinking critically about history and culture, and for understanding the centrality of such capacity to informed participation in social, political, and professional life.

### Group II

These courses introduce the theories, problems, methodologies, and substance of the social sciences. They are intended to familiarize students with different approaches to the study of human behavior and how individuals interact with and are shaped by cultural, social, economic, and political groups and institutions. Because of the complexity and scope of human behavior, these courses may be multi-disciplinary in nature. **Group II** courses provide a foundation for thinking about the social worlds we inhabit and the diverse behavioral factors that both structure human activity at multiple scales and contribute to the dynamism of social and cultural systems.

### Group III

These courses are designed to give students a basic knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of scientific inquiry and technological development, and to develop their skills in analytical thinking and quantitative reasoning. They provide grounding in the scientific method, engineering design, theorem development, or quantitative analysis. They provide students with the essential knowledge and tools required to appreciate, understand, and critically assess the elegance and power of the natural world and our effect upon it. Some understanding of basic scientific concepts and how the scientific process produces new knowledge is essential for informed participation in contemporary society. In an increasingly data-driven world, an understanding of how numerical and categorical information can be manipulated and interpreted is also vital. The goal of **Group III** courses is to promote an understanding of the value and impact of scientific thinking and engineering design, and to foster a critical appreciation of experimentation, quantitative applications, and scientific research.

## Academic Planning for Distribution Requirements

Each student is required to complete **at least 3 courses of designated distribution courses of at least 3 credit hours each in each of Distribution Groups I, II, and III**. The 3 courses in each group must include courses in at least two departments in that group. Divisional or interdisciplinary designations, e.g., HUMA or NSCI, count as departments. For the purpose of this rule, a course taken at another institution and transferred to Rice as an equivalent distribution course will be counted as one of these courses, provided that the course earns at least 2.5 semester credit hours.

Students must complete the distribution requirements in each group by taking courses that are designated as a distribution course at the time of course registration, as published in that semester's *Course Offerings*. Courses taken outside of Rice and transferred in can be used to satisfy distribution requirements, assuming they are on the list of approved and

designated distribution courses at the time they were taken. Completed courses taken prior to matriculation are subject to the list of designated distribution courses at the time of matriculation.

## Applicable Academic Graduation Requirements

Students enrolled in four- (or five-) year bachelor's programs may decide whether to follow the graduation general and major requirements in effect when they first matriculated at Rice, or those in effect when they graduate. This is known as the GA Year, or Catalog Year in the university's degree audit system, Degree Works.

If the student graduates more than seven (or eight) years after their matriculation, they must graduate under the regulations in effect at the time of their last readmission or those in effect when they graduate. Also, departments may review courses completed in a major more than seven (or eight) years before the student's anticipated graduation. If the department concludes that a course no longer satisfies the requirements of the major, it is not credited toward the major program, although it remains on the student's record.

Departmental major requirements may vary from year to year during the period between a student's matriculation and graduation. The department may, at its discretion, make any of these variations available to a student for completion of the major requirements. When declaring the major or minor, students and advisors should identify and clearly document the set of major requirements to be followed. Each should retain a copy of the documented major requirements. If a new degree program, major, or minor is created during the student's time at Rice, the new program will be available to the student as if the program appeared in the General Announcements at the time of matriculation.

## Application for Degree and Degree Conferral

Students are responsible for making certain that their plan of study meets all degree and major (and minor and/or certificate) requirements. To graduate from Rice University, all students must submit an Application for Degree Form available in ESTHER. This form is required for all students who plan to complete their degree requirements at the end of a fall, spring or summer semester. A late fee will be assessed for applying after the deadline (please consult the semester-specific Academic Calendar (<https://registrar.rice.edu/calendars>) for deadlines).

Upon completion of degree requirements, degrees are approved by the faculty and conferred in December, May, and August. Fall and Spring degree recipients may then participate in the annual commencement ceremony, celebrated each year after the conclusion of the spring semester. Under specific, limited circumstances, an undergraduate student may participate in commencement without being a degree recipient, provided that the student would be joining his or her matriculating class in that commencement. The specific policy, rules and procedures are available on the Office of the Dean of Undergraduates' website. Summer degree recipients have the option of participating in the following year's annual commencement ceremony.

## Dual-Degree Requirements

To earn a second four-year bachelor's degree, also known as a dual degree, currently enrolled undergraduates who have not yet completed their first bachelor's degree must:

- Be accepted for the second major by the major's department or program
- Fulfill all requirements for the second degree
- Complete at least 30 additional semester hours at Rice University, beyond the hours required for their first degree (these hours are applied to the second degree)

Students seeking a second degree should submit an additional declaration of major form with the Office of the Registrar ([ga.rice.edu/undergraduate-students/academic-opportunities/majors-minors-certificates](http://ga.rice.edu/undergraduate-students/academic-opportunities/majors-minors-certificates)). This paperwork should include the addition of the proposed degree and major programs along with the approval of the chair or undergraduate advisor of each department involved, indicating that the proposed course program satisfies all major and degree requirements.

Students with a previously earned bachelor's degree from Rice who wish to earn a second bachelor's should look at the Second Bachelor's Degree for Rice Alumni ([ga.rice.edu/non-traditional-students/second-four-year-bachelors-degree-alumni](http://ga.rice.edu/non-traditional-students/second-four-year-bachelors-degree-alumni)) page.