College of Letters & Science

Requirements

Students pursuing an undergraduate degree in Letters & Science must complete the University General Education Requirements (GER) (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#requirementsforundergraduatetestudytext) and the following L&S requirements:

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Foreign Language

The study of a foreign language contributes in an important way to a broad education for today's students, who live in a world where the overwhelming majority of people do not speak or read English and where much of the knowledge that is disseminated may never appear in English. Knowledge of a foreign language is important for an appreciation of the culture of the people using that language, and it also helps students to understand the structure and complexities of their own native language. Students with sufficient preparation may be able to use the foreign language for study in their chosen discipline.

To be admitted to the University of Wisconsin–Madison, students must have completed the second-year level of a single foreign language (or American Sign Language) in high school. On extremely rare occasions, students may be admitted with a foreign language deficiency, but they will be required to make up that deficiency by the time they earn their 60th degree credit, or they will not be allowed to continue.

All students working for a B.A. or B.S. degree in the College of Letters & Science must fulfill the foreign language requirement. Students with certain disabilities may apply for a substitution to the foreign language requirement by submitting required documentation to the L&S Disabilities Curricular Accommodations Committee (DCAC) for review.

B.A. Degree

For the B.A. degree, the foreign language requirement may be met in one of two ways: (1) completion of the fourth unit (level) in one language and completion of the second unit (level) in another language.

B.S. Degree

For the B.S. degree, the foreign language requirement may be met by completion of the third level (unit) of a foreign language in high school, or the equivalent third-semester-level college work.

Foreign Language Substitution

What is a Foreign Language Substitution?

The Foreign Language Substitution Package is for degree-seeking candidates in the College of Letters & Science (L&S) only who are seeking to fulfill the L&S foreign language requirements and also have a documented disability in foreign language acquisition. Specifically, the Foreign Language Substitution Package, like the foreign language requirement, provides students with information about language in general as well as the literature and culture of the people using a particular language. Courses used to meet the substitution must be approved by the designated academic dean in L&S Undergraduate Academic Deans' Services (101 Ingraham Hall (https://saa.ls.wisc.edu/offices/academic-deans-services/)). Classes used for the substitution package cannot be used to fulfill any of the following requirements:

- Major requirements
- Breadth (humanities, literature, social science, science)
- Ethnic studies
- General Education Requirements (Comm A, Comm B, QR-A, QR-B)

How do I qualify for a Foreign Language Substitution?

The Disabilities Curricular Accommodations Committee (DCAC) of the College of Letters & Science can approve a substitution to the foreign language requirement for students in Letters & Science only with certain disabilities that make a course substitution appropriate. Extensive and very specific documentation is required from students and disability specialists. Further information may be obtained from the L&S Undergraduate Academic Deans' Services (http://saa.ls.wisc.edu/foreign-language-substitution-package.htm) (Room 101, Ingraham Hall, at 1155 Observatory Drive; 608-262-0617) or the McBurney Disability Resource Center (https://mcburney.wisc.edu/) (702 West Johnson Street; 608-263-2741).

Note that an appointment at the McBurney Center is required before submitting the application. This appointment should be made no less than one semester/term prior to applying for the substitution package. McBurney Center staff will help you determine what documentation is necessary for the application, as well as assess whether additional testing is required. For more detailed information about applying for the substitution package, please see L&S foreign language substitution (https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/84515/).
BREADTH

Ways of Knowing
At the heart of any degree in the liberal arts and sciences is an active understanding of the variety and breadth of the many scholarly approaches to knowing the world. Every student in the College of Letters & Science experiences significant exposure to three principal fields of knowledge: the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. These broad fields of knowledge are not the same as the areas of depth that we call "majors." In fact, any particular major—or even a particular course within a major—might well involve more than one of these fields of knowledge. (For example, imagine a seminar on "people and the environment" that combines historical background, research on social patterns of energy use, and scientific understandings of climate.) Working together, each of these three fields of knowledge represents a particular "way of knowing" about the world around us.

Arts and Humanities
Courses in the arts and humanities involve knowing the world through the production and analysis of artistic, literary, and scholarly work. Some courses examine the fine and performing arts, or literature, presenting students with opportunities to interpret and think critically about these creative expressions of the human condition. Other courses help students to understand and compare religious and philosophical conceptions of humankind. Still other courses take on historical subjects, focusing on moments of change and periods of continuity for the peoples and regions of the world. These courses all encourage students to analyze the range of creative and cultural artifacts, expressions, and ideas of human existence—history, literature, art, culture, folklore—and to use that information to better understand humanity and to cultivate civic and social responsibility.

Social Sciences
Courses in the social sciences involve knowing the world through the systematic study of human society, interactions, and institutions. The social sciences explore these issues from a wide range of perspectives and research techniques, both quantitative and qualitative. Through these courses students learn how to formulate research questions and determine what techniques are best used to answer those questions—for example, exploring ideas and developing theories, conducting surveys and building models, or observing and participating in social life itself. Developing such analytical skills assists students as they approach complex problems and seek to solve them in both the workplace and the community.

Natural Sciences
Courses in the natural sciences involve knowing the world through scientific inquiry—collecting objective information that can be used to explain observed natural phenomena in a way that is thorough and verifiable. The natural sciences are often divided into the physical sciences (dealing with matter and energy, or the study of the earth, atmosphere, and oceans) and the biological sciences (dealing with life and living systems, like plants, animals, and environments). These courses often contain laboratory components that allow students to gain firsthand experience in scientific research methods. By completing this requirement, science and non-science majors alike will gain an appreciation for science as a "way of systematically looking at the natural world, understanding how this process can be used to inform decision-making in a wide range of political, economic, and social contexts.

Together, these broad "ways of knowing" give students a complementary set of tools for seeing, imagining, and asking questions about the world—tools that enhance creative problem solving no matter what the field. And, because twenty-first-century knowledge is not neatly compartmentalized, it is worth noting that these areas of study intersect and overlap; courses in some areas draw upon strategies used in the others. Experiences in "breadth" courses can be life-changing: we frequently hear that a course taken to fulfill a breadth requirement introduced someone to a subject that became a new major, a new way of looking at a current major, or a lifelong interest. For more information, visit the KnowledgeBase help document (https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=27031).

A liberal education involves not only the nature and kinds of knowledge but also the purpose for which knowledge should be used. These considerations are embodied in the breadth or distribution requirement and call for knowledge in several fields of learning. The purpose of this breadth requirement is to ensure that a degree candidate will obtain an understanding of approaches in the humanities, social sciences, biological sciences, and physical sciences adequate for use both as a citizen and as a specialist.

Breadth Requirements
The L&S breadth requirement is met with 36 credits in the three broad areas of knowledge: humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Please note that if a course can satisfy more than one breadth designation (such as a "Z" course, which can meet EITHER Humanities OR Social Science), students may select the course designation in which they want the course to count for the purpose of fulfilling a particular breadth requirement. However, this course may be counted only once and in only one area. Credits cannot be split between two distinct breadth areas.

Courses that carry L&S breadth credit are expected to broaden significantly a student’s understanding of the world and a general
disciplinary approach to problems studied, questions asked, modes of inquiry undertaken to answer those questions, analysis of research findings, communication about results, and implications for further study and/or action. Many courses in L&S carry a breadth designation; however, some types of courses may not convey breadth.

B.A. Degree

Humanities: Students are required to complete 12 credits in the humanities, 6 of which must be in literature. Look in the courses (http://guide.wisc.edu/courses/) section of the Guide under Course Designation for course qualifications.

Social Sciences: Students are required to complete 12 credits in social sciences. Look in the courses (http://guide.wisc.edu/courses/) section of the Guide under Course Designation for course qualifications.

Natural Sciences: Students are required to complete 12 credits in natural sciences. Students must take at least one 3+ credit course in physical science AND one 3+ credit course in biological science. The additional six (6) credits can be any combination of natural, biological or physical science credits to bring the total to twelve (12) credits. Look in the courses (http://guide.wisc.edu/courses/) section of the Guide under Course Designation for course qualifications.

B.S. Degree

Humanities: Students are required to complete 12 credits in the humanities, 6 of which must be in literature. Look in the courses (http://guide.wisc.edu/courses/) section of the Guide under Course Designation for course qualifications.

Social Sciences: Students are required to complete 12 credits in social sciences. Look in the courses (http://guide.wisc.edu/courses/) section of the Guide under Course Designation for course qualifications.

Natural Sciences: Students are required to complete 12 credits in natural sciences. Students must complete 6 credits in physical science AND 6 credits in biological science. Look in the courses (http://guide.wisc.edu/courses/) section of the Guide under Course Designation for course qualifications.

DEPT H: UNDERSTANDING A FIELD OF STUDY (MAJOR)

The process of declaring and completing a major—often, but not always, attached to a particular university department—provides students with an opportunity to concentrate on an in-depth investigation of at least one subject or issue, putting their tools for learning and ways of knowing to focused use. This intensive understanding of one topic helps students to appreciate the potential depth of the others. A student’s work in the major reflects a continuing progression of skills, knowledge, and values, where advanced learning opportunities in upper-level coursework grow from and expand upon earlier experiences, helping students build additional depth in writing, speaking, information literacy, and critical thinking skills from the perspective of a particular discipline. In senior capstone or independent research projects, students are frequently asked to synthesize what they have learned and apply it in a variety of new situations. By the conclusion of their studies, students in the major are better able to understand themselves and their society, to develop their intellectual powers outside of a University setting, and to make productive contributions to the world around them. (See list of L&S majors (p. 3).

MAJOR STUDY

Every candidate for an L&S baccalaureate degree must satisfy a depth requirement encompassing a specified and approved major field of study. Students may elect a department major, a major in a recognized interdisciplinary program, or may develop an individual major if approved by a faculty review committee. Students in Letters & Science may not complete the depth requirement with any department or program outside the college, except for the departments of Biochemistry, Environmental Sciences, and Microbiology. These departments are the only exceptions.

All L&S undergraduate students are required to declare a major by the time they have earned 86 degree credits. Students who do not declare a major by the appropriate time will have an enrollment hold placed on their records so they cannot enroll in future terms.

1. All L&S undergraduate students are required to declare a major or be admitted into an L&S special degree program upon the completion of 86 credits (including credits from transfer, AP, test, study abroad, or retroactive credits).

Students have three choices in meeting the depth requirement in the College of Letters & Science:

1. Single Major
2. Multiple Majors
3. Individual Major

Single Major

Students may fulfill the requirements of a single major as outlined in the descriptions of the various L&S majors (p. 3).

Multiple Majors

All students may satisfy the requirements for more than one major, either department and/or interdisciplinary major, and have this fact noted on the transcript and other university records.

Students may complete one or more established majors and one individual major if approved by a faculty review committee. No student may earn more than one individual major.

Individual Major (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/college-wide/individual-major-ba/#text)

REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO ALL MAJORS

Major Declaration Policy

Policy

All L&S undergraduate students are required to declare a major or be admitted into a program before or upon the completion of 86 credits (including transfer credits, AP, test credits, study abroad, or retroactive credits). Any student pursuing undergraduate studies in Letters & Science must declare at least one (1) major in L&S in order to graduate.

Major declaration has benefits that are critical to student success. Students with majors:

• Can plan for timely graduation, which uses their resources wisely. Graduating on time lowers the overall cost of education and allows students to pursue their next life goals.
• Connect to the major department, gaining access to departmental advising resources, faculty contacts, and courses limited to majors.
• Connect with other students who are pursuing similar academic interests.
• Get timely and important information about the major (advising hours and workshops, upcoming courses, social events, student groups, speakers, opportunities, etc.).
• “Lock in” major requirements, so if those requirements change, students are held to the rules in place when they declared.

Declaring a major is an essential part of a student’s academic career, and is integral to timely graduation; the great majority of students do declare their majors by the time they earn 86 credits. This policy is intended to help undeclared students reach out to advisors so they find majors that suit their talents and interests. This policy is also intended to make the best use of both student and university resources, and to help students and their advisors create a plan for academic success and timely graduation.

How to Declare and Cancel a Major
Students must declare a major through the department administering that program. Students may have as many majors as they wish, but must cancel any major they feel they cannot complete.

Mastery of Upper-Level Work in the Major
All students must complete in residence a minimum of 15 credits of major course work defined as "upper-level" by the major department or program. (Please see the section on Residence Requirements below for additional information about credits taken "in residence.") Furthermore, students must earn a minimum 2,000 grade point average on all upper-level work taken in the major, in residence.

Residence Requirement in the Major (also known as the “Study Abroad Stipulation”)
All students, especially those students who participate in UW–Madison sponsored Study Abroad programs, must complete a minimum of 15 credits, at any level, in their major or major department, in courses taken on the UW–Madison campus. These credits may not include retroactive credit or credit earned by department examination.

Advising
Questions about choosing a major can be discussed with department advisors and faculty, academic deans, members of L&S Undergraduate Academic Services and the L&S Honors Program office, and with the Cross-College Advising Service staff. For additional information about advising, see the description of L&S advising programs (p. ).

Completing a Major Outside L&S
L&S students must complete at least one major in the College of Letters & Science to satisfy the depth requirement. Students interested in completing an additional major outside the College of Letters & Science must first consult the dean’s office for the other school or college. If the other school or college approves the additional major, students must consult with an L&S academic dean to get permission to pursue a second major outside L&S.

Total Degree Credits: 120
A minimum of 120 degree credits is required for most baccalaureate degrees granted by the College of Letters & Science. The total credits for the degree encompass the requirements detailed above, but also include elective credits not associated with any specific requirement, that allow students to explore other areas of academic interest. The total credit requirement for some special programs is more than 120 degree credits. The college allows degree credit, as well as placement credit, for the mastery of some L&S course work as demonstrated by successfully completing appropriate tests. (See Credit by Departmental Examination (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#admissiontext)).

Liberal Arts and Science Credits: 108
Of the minimum 120 credits required for graduation for a B.A. or B.S. degree at least 108 credits must be in courses designated as Liberal Arts and Science (LAS) courses. These courses appear in the Guide as L&S credits and can be identified by looking at the course designation section for a course in the Guide (http://guide.wisc.edu/courses/). Nearly every course taught in L&S is designated in this way.

Non–L&S Courses and L&S Degree Credit
Liberal Arts and Science designation (LAS) Courses. The College of Letters & Science has long recognized that courses offered by other units of the university provide valuable and appropriate learning experiences for students pursuing a degree offered by the college. The college has approved many of these courses for L&S students to take for degree credit, and after careful review, has determined that these courses are Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) courses. These courses can be identified by looking at the course designation section for a course in the Guide (http://guide.wisc.edu/courses/). Courses designated as liberal arts and science courses count toward the L&S degree requirements, including requirements related to breadth and level.

Non-L&S Courses Required for L&S Majors. Courses taught in departments located in schools or colleges other than L&S, but which are required for completion of an L&S major, are considered Liberal Arts and Science courses. Such courses will either carry the Liberal Arts and Sciences designation in the Guide (http://guide.wisc.edu/courses/), or their Liberal Arts and Sciences status will appear in the DARS degree audit. In both cases, these courses count as part of the 108 Liberal Arts and Sciences credits required for a degree.

ACCEPTANCE TO A MAJOR
A department, program, or school may specify prerequisites for acceptance into a major, such as a minimum grade point average or completion of particular courses with a minimum grade. Students are responsible for reviewing the quality requirements for a particular major or school as outlined under the L&S majors (p. ) section of the Guide. Students should consult the department advisor or the school or college dean’s office for information. Only the department or school can make an exception. Students not accepted in a major or school must select a different major.
MASTERY OF INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED WORK

Students must complete a minimum of 60 credits in courses with the Intermediate or Advanced level designation, with a grade point average of 2.000 on all courses carried, whether passed or not. The purpose of this requirement is to encourage students to undertake advanced work to the greatest possible extent and to ensure that they achieve greater sophistication and a deeper mastery of subject matter as they advance through the baccalaureate curriculum.

RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT IN THE MAJOR

All L&S undergraduate students must complete 15 degree credits of upper-level work in their major and in residence. Upper-level courses are classes determined by the major program/department to be in-depth within the context of that particular major. In addition, students must complete 15 credits in the major/subject “on campus.” These are courses taken in residence where the instructional content is provided by a UW-Madison instructor. This excludes instruction by affiliated institutions, such as those offering UW-Madison students credit abroad.

RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT IN THE DEGREE

All L&S students must earn a minimum of 30 degree credits in residence at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A course is considered in residence if the student enrolls for credit through UW-Madison. This would include any course that is offered:

- By UW-Madison, in any instructional mode (in-person, online, or hybrid)
- Through a UW-Madison administered program, either domestically or internationally (i.e., Study Abroad through International Academic Programs)

A course is not in residence when credit is earned via:

- A course transferred from another institution, including other UW System schools or UW Extension;
- A course taken abroad through another institution;
- Credit awarded according to scores earned on AP (Advanced Placement), IB (International Baccalaureate), or other approved exams;
- Retroactive foreign language credit.

UW-Extension and other campuses in the University of Wisconsin System are different institutions and credit earned at any of these campuses is considered transfer credit and not in residence.

Senior Residence Rule. The 30 minimum credits a student must earn in residence should be completed in the senior year (after a student has completed 86 degree credits). This requirement intends to ensure that the student’s depth of study—which should occur in more advanced-level courses, within the major, with faculty instruction, and in areas of research—are uniquely UW-Madison experiences. These credits do not have to be contiguous for the requirement to be met. Because the requirement begins with the 87th credits, students have the flexibility to take four (4) credits out of residence in the senior year without needing to obtain special permission. Exceptions to the senior residence requirement may be granted in cases where a student is in good academic standing (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/#policiesandregulationstext) and has a specific need to take fewer than 30 credits in their senior year. Consult an L&S academic dean (https://saa.ls.wisc.edu/offices/academic-deans-services/) for more information.

QUALITY OF WORK REQUIREMENTS

A total of 120 degree credits is required for graduation, with a minimum 2.000 grade point average on all courses taken in residence, whether or not each course is passed.

The quality of work requirements establish a minimum grade point average in four specific areas that must be met to receive a Letters & Science degree. In order to satisfy these requirements, the student must earn a minimum 2.000 grade point average on all courses carried at UW–Madison, whether passed or not, in these areas:

1. All courses carried for a grade at UW–Madison (cumulative grade point average, as reported by the Registrar).
2. All courses designated Intermediate (I) or Advanced (A);
3. All courses in the major (or majors) or program;
4. All upper-level courses in the major or program, as designated by the major department or program, for the 15-credit residence requirement;
5. All courses carried for a grade at UW–Madison (cumulative grade point average, as reported by the Registrar). Courses carried on a refresher basis (see is it possible to retake a course that I have already passed or received degree credit (https://kb.wisc.edu/is/page.php?id=21934)) are excluded from the grade point average as determined for categories 2, 3, and 4 above. Repeating a failed course will not remove the failure from the student’s record or from GPA calculations. This summary of college grade point requirements does not include those for admission to certain majors and special courses within the college or to other colleges and schools within the university, or to honors courses.

FOUNDATIONS: TOOLS FOR LEARNING

For all UW–Madison undergraduates, these learning experiences begin with students satisfying the university’s General Education Requirements—usually by taking courses taught within the College of Letters & Science. These common foundations cover key topics which are necessary for any undergraduate major and any prospective career: oral and written communication; mathematical and logical reasoning; and the diversity of cultures within global society.

In addition to these university-wide requirements, all L&S students must attain knowledge of a foreign language, in work that combines training in both communication and culture, so students may better understand and participate in the global community of the twenty-first century. Together, these “tools for learning” may be acquired through many different courses taught by many different departments. The key is that they are never taught in isolation, but always considered together with broad exposure to various “ways of knowing” from the arts and humanities, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. (For more on the General Education Requirements, see Requirements for Undergraduate Study (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#requirementsforundergraduatestudytext); (http://www.ls.wisc.edu/
LETTERS & SCIENCE DEGREES

The College of Letters & Science offers two basic degrees for students in the General Course and five other degrees for students in special programs. Students in the General Course, regardless of major, may earn either a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree. The special degrees are: Bachelor of Science–Applied Mathematics, Engineering, and Physics (AMEP); Bachelor of Arts–Journalism or Bachelor of Science–Journalism; Bachelor of Landscape Architecture; Bachelor of Music; and Bachelor of Social Work. (For details, see sections for AMEP (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/mathematics/applied-mathematics-engineering-physics-bs-amep/), Journalism (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/journalism-mass-communication/), Landscape Architecture (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/planning-landscape-architecture/landscape-architecture-bla/), Music (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/music/), and Social Work (http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/letters-science/social-work/) in the L&S section of this Guide.) Students who have multiple majors in L&S earn only one undergraduate degree.

Honors degrees may be earned in all of the above (except for Landscape Architecture) upon completion of the L&S Honors Program. See L&S Honors Program (p. ) for more information.