THE MAJOR

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Policies Governing Majors and Concentrations

In addition to the Core, all GS students must fulfill the requirements for a major to qualify for a bachelor’s degree from Columbia. The purpose of a major is to provide students with an opportunity to delve deeply into the study of a particular subject, developing expertise and critical thinking through sustained and advanced work. Students may declare their respective majors as early as their first semester at GS provided they have completed at least 45 points toward the degree, with at least 12 points in progress at GS. Majors are noted on the Columbia transcript.

Students should consider various options and become familiar with the requirements for a particular major before filing a major declaration. In most cases, students should have begun coursework in the discipline before declaring the major. Faculty members are often excellent resources for discussing possible majors. Many departments sponsor open houses for potential majors in their departmental offices. Certain open house to obtain more information about the major from faculty and students in the major department. Major open houses are usually held in the spring term and are publicized through the DOS News & resources for discussing possible majors. Many departments sponsor open houses for potential majors during the academic year.

For information about specific majors and their requirements, see Major Fields of Study (http://bulletin.columbia.edu/general-studies/undergraduates/majors-concentrations).

Students may also link to department websites to obtain additional information. It is recommended that students also attend a department open house to obtain more information about the major from faculty students in the major department. Major open houses are usually held in the spring term and are publicized through the DOS News & Announcements newsletter. Many departments also have informational handouts for potential majors in their departmental offices. Certain majors require an application process and approval by the department.

Students eligible to declare a major may do so during designated major declaration periods, namely October in the fall, and February 15 - March 15 in the spring.

Students are expected to meet the requirements for the major that are in place at the time they declare their majors. Students who do not complete the major requirements within five years of declaring the major may be expected to comply with any new requirements that have been subsequently established.

The following rules pertain to all majors; exceptions to any of these rules are noted by individual departments on their official websites:

1. No course with a grade of D will be credited toward the major.
2. No course with the mark of P (Pass) will count toward the major.
3. No more than two courses may overlap with GS core requirements.
4. Students must check with departments for permission to count summer session classes and courses taken while studying abroad toward the major.
5. No more than 12 transfer credits may count toward the major (some departments have a different limit).
6. Students must submit all required paperwork relevant to petitioning major departments for transfer credit toward the major in the same semester in which the major is declared; failure to meet this deadline may result in the loss of eligibility to transfer credit toward the major.
7. At least 18 points of coursework toward the major must be taken at Columbia.
8. Students who have not declared a major prior to earning 90 points will be placed on Registration Hold and be subject to Academic Warning.

Concentrations

Concentrations are optional and provide students with the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of a secondary field of study in addition to the major. Most departments and programs offer a concentration. Some programs offer only a concentration. See Major Fields of Study (http://bulletin.columbia.edu/general-studies/undergraduates/majors-concentrations) for more information about concentrations and requirements.

Choosing a Concentration

Courses counted toward a departmental concentration may simultaneously fulfill core requirements as long as the total number of overlapping courses from the major and/or concentration counted to the core does not exceed two. (Since the premedical concentration is not considered a departmental concentration, it is exempt from this policy.)

Students interested in choosing a concentration in addition to a major must do so before completing 80 points toward the degree and must have a minimum GPA of 3.2. In order for a concentration to appear on the Columbia transcript, students must file paperwork with their GS advisor.

Transfer Credit Toward the Major and Concentration

The director of undergraduate studies (DUS) in each department is authorized to accept up to 12 GS-approved transfer credits toward the major; some departments have a different limit. The limit on transfer credits toward a concentration is six. Students must check individual department policies concerning transfer credits. Credits from other institutions of higher education do not automatically transfer—and in some cases are not approved—toward the Columbia major or concentration, although they may count as electives or core requirements.

It is the student’s responsibility to discuss with the DUS the possibility of counting transfer credits toward the major or concentration and to provide the department with any materials needed in order to make a decision about transfer credits. When reviewing transfer credits the DUS needs copies of official transcripts from the other institutions and often the syllabus for the course in question (supplied by the student).

Note: Students must submit all required paperwork relevant to petitioning major departments for transfer credit toward the major or concentration in the same semester in which the major or concentration is declared; failure to meet this deadline will result in the loss of eligibility for transfer credit toward the major or concentration.

Double Majors

Students should have a strong academic record, and excellent academic reasons for choosing to declare two programs (majors and concentrations). Students who wish to pursue two programs must declare both programs prior to completing 80 points toward the degree. Students who wish to declare two programs must have a minimum GPA of 3.2.
Students cannot declare two programs owned by the same offering unit (department, institute, or center). For example, a student may not declare programs in Russian Language and Culture and in Slavic Studies, both of which are owned by the Department of Slavic Languages; similarly, a student may not declare programs in Mathematics and in Applied Mathematics, both of which are owned by the Department of Mathematics. All joint majors (e.g., Economics-Political Science) will be considered as owned by both offering units, so that a student may not, for example, major in both Political Science and Economics-Political Science.

Double Counting

Students who declare two programs may, in some cases, overlap requirements for the two programs. There are three scenarios in which students may double-count program requirements; students may take advantage of any or all of these scenarios:

• If two programs both require the same coursework to teach fundamental skills needed for the field, those courses may be applied to both programs; specifically: (1) elementary and intermediate foreign language courses, (2) the calculus sequence (I through IV, or Honors A and B), (3) introductory courses in Statistics (STAT UN1101 or 1201), and (4) the introductory course in computer programming (COMS W1004).

• Students may also apply a maximum of two courses to both programs, if each course is already approved toward the fulfillment of the student’s two declared programs. Offering departments, institutes, or centers may choose to restrict the double-counting of particular courses, and such restrictions cannot be appealed.

• As with students with one declared program, the maximum number of courses students with two declared programs may overlap to the Core is two. Students may not overlap core courses with both of their programs (triple-counting).