Policies on Majors & Minors

Departmental Directors of Undergraduate Studies

For every major and minor that is offered at Johns Hopkins, there is a faculty member or their designee who serves as the program’s Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS). They are available to answer questions about their major(s) and/or minor(s). The directors also assign faculty advisors to students who declare a major or minor.

Click for a list of Directors of Undergraduate Studies in Arts and Sciences (http://www.advising.jhu.edu/directors.php) or in Engineering (http://engineering.jhu.edu/academics/degrees-at-a-glance).

Declaring a Major in Arts and Sciences

Students who enter the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences from high school may indicate an intended major on the advising materials sent to them over the summer. However, they will be advised by the Office of Academic Advising during the freshman year and are classified as pre-majors. In April, freshmen in Arts and Sciences will meet with an academic advisor to declare their major. To declare a major at a later time, see “Changing Majors or Advisors.” Students must declare a major by the end of their second year in order to assure that they will complete requirements for graduation in four years.

Declaring a Major in Engineering

Students who enter the Whiting School of Engineering (WSE) declare a specific engineering major on their application for admission. A student must take direct action to change the major.

Students who select the Biomedical Engineering major must be accepted into the program at the time of application for admission. The student’s offer of admission to the university will indicate either:

- acceptance into the BME program
- acceptance into any Engineering or Arts & Sciences major except BME

On a space available basis, BME may accept a limited number of students into the program after the freshman year based on the overall academic credentials of each applicant. However, this option is exercised very infrequently by the BME department.

Students may also select the more general “undecided engineering” category on the admissions application to enter the WSE. It is recommended that undecided engineering students select a specific major no later than the end of freshman year.

Interdisciplinary Major

Students in the humanities and social sciences who wish to design their own major, or who wish to divide their studies between departments, may be able to create their own program by following the requirements for an interdisciplinary major. The interdisciplinary major is designed for the student whose academic interests straddle several traditional disciplines but who maintains a substantive focus. For example, a student interested in the Revolutionary period may construct a curriculum using courses from History, English, History of Art, and Sociology. Another may wish to focus on children in poverty, drawing from Anthropology and Economics. Proposals for the interdisciplinary major should be submitted at the end of the sophomore year. Though rarely a viable option, engineering students who want to pursue an interdisciplinary major as a second major must follow the same guidelines.

This major requires the support of a faculty advisor and the approval of the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee. A student wishing to complete this major must work with a full-time faculty member from the Homewood campus to construct a curricular plan of past and future course work. This plan should offer a list of courses representing 45 to 60 credits. These courses can include all related prerequisites and related courses, such as language study. Independent study, research, and internships may be included. Twenty-one of these credits must be earned at the 300-level or higher. Courses from the School of Engineering are not permitted, except by petition.

The written proposal should show how each of these courses provides insight on a given topic, concept, issue, time period, etc. There is no need to defend the principle of interdisciplinary study, as that is a given, but the student must show that the courses from two or more departments represent a conceptual whole.

After receiving approval from a sponsoring faculty advisor, the student then works with the Office of Academic Advising to finalize the proposal and to present it to the Curriculum Committee, consisting of faculty and undergraduates, who must approve the proposal by majority vote. After approval, the student continues to work with the faculty advisor and Academic Advising to oversee completion of requirements.

Changing Majors or Advisors

Once students in Arts and Sciences have declared a major, they may change their major or their faculty advisor at a later date by completing a Change of Major form available from the Office of the Registrar (75 Garland) or the Office of Academic Advising (Garland, Suite 300) and submitting the new form to the Office of the Registrar.

After students in Engineering have enrolled at Hopkins, they may change their major or their faculty advisor by completing a Change of Major form available from the Office of the Registrar (75 Garland) or the Office of Engineering Advising (Shaffer 103). Note that students may declare the BME major only as entering freshmen or as one of a limited number of students accepted into the program after the freshman year based on the overall academic credentials of each applicant and on space available.

Completion of the Change of Major form requires that a student contact the director of undergraduate studies in the new major department to be assigned a new faculty advisor. The completed Change of Major form should be submitted to the Registrar’s office.

Double Majors

Students may fulfill the requirements for more than one major. Students may add or drop an additional major by completing the appropriate form, available from the Registrar or from the student’s academic advising office. The form must be signed by the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the major before it is submitted to the Registrar. The DUS will also assign a faculty advisor to the student.

Upon graduation, a notation is placed on the academic record acknowledging completion of requirements for the additional major(s).
A student with a double major receives the degree (B.A./B.S.) associated with the student’s primary major. Completing a second major does not entitle the student to a second degree. When completing a double major, students need only satisfy the distribution requirements of one of the majors.

**Declaring a Minor**

Students who wish to complete the requirements for a minor should declare their intentions to the minor department or center sponsoring the minor. Forms for that purpose are available in the Registrar’s Office and both advising offices. A notation regarding completion of a minor is placed on the transcript, but the minor does not appear on the diploma.

Official recognition with notation on the academic record is not given for completion of majors or minors at other divisions of the university or at other colleges.

**Restrictions Applying to Double Majors and Minors**

Within the Hopkins curriculum, requirements for the completion of undergraduate majors are established by academic departments and approved by the Homewood Academic Council, acting on recommendations from the Curriculum Committees of the Krieger and Whiting Schools. Students who fulfill the necessary prerequisites and satisfy the specified course requirements for a major will be certified as having completed that major. While departments are free to designate the range of courses that may satisfy major requirements for their own academic programs, they may not prohibit the use of course work presented for their department’s major from being used to satisfy the requirements of other majors. In other words, students may “double count” coursework that independently meets the requirements of more than one major.

Students are encouraged to choose additional areas of study to complement their major. However, students may not choose a minor with an identical name to their major. For example, a student majoring in Africana Studies may not declare a minor in Africana Studies.

**Other prohibited combinations include:**

1. Students majoring in Molecular and Cellular Biology may not major in Biology.
2. Students majoring in the Natural Sciences Area may only double major or minor in a program outside of the natural sciences.
3. Students majoring in Romance Languages may not major or minor in one of the individual Romance Languages (except for the Spanish for the Professions minor).
4. Students majoring in French may not complete either French minor option.

**Closely-related majors and minors that are allowed include:**

1. Economics majors may complete a Financial Economics minor.
2. Spanish majors and Romance Languages Majors may complete the Spanish for the Professions minor.
3. Computer Science majors may complete a Computer Integrated Surgery minor.

The examples provided above may not be an exhaustive list and students who have questions about combinations of related programs should consult an advisor in their respective advising office.