

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 semesters (fall and/or spring, and up to one summer semester).*
- 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 above).
- 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 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).
- Satisfy the Analyzing Diversity Requirement (see below).
- Complete one Lifetime Physical Activity Program (LPAP) course for one credit hour. 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:

- **LPAP courses:** No more than 4 hours of credit for LPAP courses may be counted toward graduation.
- **COLL courses:** 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.)
- ***Full-time registration:** Participation in a full semester Rice-approved Study Abroad program may count towards the fulfillment of this requirement (where full-time enrollment is at least 12 semester credit hours in that fall or spring semester). See the [Registration \(https://ga.rice.edu/undergraduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/registration/#header\)](https://ga.rice.edu/undergraduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/registration/#header) section for more information regarding full-time and part-time status.

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- ****Pass/Fail courses:** If students have completed as Pass/Fail courses that are needed to meet the requirements for their major, minor, or certificate, they should request in writing to the Office of the Registrar that the P grade be replaced with the letter grade earned. Otherwise, the Office of the Registrar will uncover the P grade during the final degree audit process (which begins with day one of the student's final semester). Once the P is uncovered, it will not be restored or subsequently returned to that course; therefore, students should review their Degree Works degree audits carefully to ensure that the courses are applied in their degree audit as expected.

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). A 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 complete the First-Year Writing Assessment prior to matriculating. Based on their results on the assessment, students may be placed into either FWIS 100 *Introduction to Academic Writing* or FWIS 100-299 (various topics). Students who do not complete the Writing Assessment will be placed automatically into FWIS 100.

Students who are placed into FWIS 100 must successfully complete that course during their first semester, 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 a 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 a 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 requirement.
- 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 FWIS 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.

FWIS courses 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 [Committee on Examinations and Standing \(https://dou.rice.edu/committee-examinations-and-standing/\)](https://dou.rice.edu/committee-examinations-and-standing/), which may approve a drop on an exception basis.

See the [Program in Writing and Communication's website \(https://pwc.rice.edu/\)](https://pwc.rice.edu/) for FWIS course descriptions and for more information on the required First-Year Writing Assessment.

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. In some instances, courses satisfying major, minor, and/or certificate requirements may additionally meet distribution requirements.

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 \(https://courses.rice.edu\)](https://courses.rice.edu). 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.

Analyzing Diversity Requirement

Beginning Fall 2022, all matriculated students must complete and pass one course of three or more credit hours in the area of Analyzing Diversity. Such courses primarily focus on how difference is understood across human societies, on how those understandings have changed over time, and on the consequences of those understandings for human development. Courses meeting this requirement equip students with foundational know-how in the critical study of matters related to diversity, and prepare them to apply such knowledge in other areas of study as they advance at the university.

Analyzing Diversity courses are grounded in three principal areas:

- *Social and Cultural Analysis* prepare students to scrupulously examine systems of belief about human difference, and how those beliefs are made manifest in cultural practices and social dynamics (particularly in multicultural contexts).
- *Systemic Inequities and their Redress*, pay considerable attention to inequities related to race, region, religion, ethnicity, (dis)ability, gender expression, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity. Students in these courses also learn to analyze efforts to address and redress inequity, disenfranchisement, and injustice.
- *Equity, Knowledge, and the University* attend to the disciplines comprising higher education— helping students to analyze both the ramifications that systemic inequities hold for the production and dissemination of knowledge, and the difference that more equitable and inclusive societies, research practices, and pedagogies can make for the core functions of the university and beyond.

A wide range of courses are identified as eligible to meet the Analyzing Diversity (AD) graduation requirement and are accessible to students from throughout the university. All AD courses additionally carry Distribution Credit or fulfill the university's Writing and Communication (FWIS) requirement and are allowed to fulfill simultaneously more than one university graduation requirement category.

Students are encouraged to complete the requirement within their first two years of study, and by taking an AD-eligible course published in that semester's [Course Offerings \(https://courses.rice.edu\)](https://courses.rice.edu). Courses taken outside of Rice and transferred in can be used to satisfy this requirement,

provided the course is approved for transfer as an AD-eligible Rice equivalent course at the time it was taken, or at the time of matriculation if the course was completed prior to matriculation.

Applicable Academic Graduation Requirements

Students enrolled in bachelor's programs may choose to follow the graduation general and program requirements in effect for any academic year between their matriculation or graduation. 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 years after their matriculation, they must graduate under the regulations in effect at the time of their last readmission, or those in effect for any academic year between their readmission and graduation. Departments and programs may review coursework completed more than seven years before the student's anticipated graduation. However, if they determine that a course no longer satisfies the requirements of that major, minor, or certificate, then it is not credited toward the program's requirements, although it remains on the student's record.

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

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 (<https://esther.rice.edu>). 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/) (<https://registrar.rice.edu/calendars/>) for deadlines). Upon completion of degree requirements, degrees are approved by the faculty and conferred three times each academic year in December, May, and August.

As for commencement, August and December graduates may choose to participate in a combined December Commencement Ceremony for undergraduate and graduate degree recipients, or they may return to campus the following Spring for the annual May Commencement Ceremony. May graduates are expected to participate in the annual May Commencement Ceremony, celebrated each year after the conclusion of the spring semester. Under special circumstances and with appropriate approvals, some upcoming August degree candidates may be granted permission by the [Dean of Undergraduates](https://dou.rice.edu/student-resources/petitions-special-requests/request-participate-commencement/) (<https://dou.rice.edu/student-resources/petitions-special-requests/request-participate-commencement/>) or the [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral](https://graduate.rice.edu/)

[Studies](https://graduate.rice.edu/) (<https://graduate.rice.edu/>) to participate in the annual May Commencement Ceremony prior to their August degree conferral.

Under specific, limited circumstances, an undergraduate student may participate in commencement without being a degree recipient, provided that the student would be joining their matriculating class in that commencement. The specific policy, rules, and procedures are available on the [Office of the Dean of Undergraduates' website](https://dou.rice.edu/) (<https://dou.rice.edu/>).

Dual-Degree Requirements

Rice undergraduate students have the option of concurrently pursuing a *second* four-year bachelor's degree at Rice in a different discipline. In addition to being in a different discipline, the second degree must also be different from the one already pursuing; for example, an undergraduate pursuing a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree may also complete coursework leading to a Bachelor of Science (BS) or Bachelor of Music (BMus) degree.

To earn a second 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 bachelor's degree (these hours are applied to the second bachelor's degree).

Students seeking a second degree should submit an additional Declaration of Major form to the [Office of the Registrar](https://registrar.rice.edu/students/majors_minors/) (https://registrar.rice.edu/students/majors_minors/). This paperwork should include the addition of the proposed degree and major programs, along with the approval of the chair or undergraduate advisor of the degree and major combination being added (i.e., the signature of the department chair and/or advisor). The entire undergraduate record for these dual degree and multiple major students continues cumulatively. For instructions on how to declare a second bachelor's degree and major in ESTHER (<https://esther.rice.edu/>), visit the [Major, Minors, and University Certificates](https://registrar.rice.edu/students/majors_minors-and-university-certificates/) (https://registrar.rice.edu/students/majors_minors-and-university-certificates/) page of the Office of the Registrar's website.

Under certain conditions, students have the option to declare majors offered in different degree programs without pursuing the dual degree option. For example, a student may pursue a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree with a major in Physics, and choose to double major in Religion. (Rice does not award a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree with a major in Religion, only a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree with a major in Religion.) In this scenario, the student selects and completes not only the degree and major requirements of their primary program, but the major requirements for their double major. With the above example, upon conferral of the Bachelor of Science (BS) degree with a major in Physics, the student's final academic transcript will include not only that awarded Bachelor of Science (BS) degree and Physics major, but the sentence notation, "Student has additionally met the requirements for a major in Religion, normally associated with a Bachelor of Arts degree." More information on this option, sometimes referred to as the "No-Degree Option", may be found on the [Office of the Registrar](https://registrar.rice.edu/) (https://registrar.rice.edu) website, on the [Major, Minors, and University Certificates](https://registrar.rice.edu/students/majors-minors-and-university-certificates/) (<https://registrar.rice.edu/students/majors-minors-and-university-certificates/>) page.

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](https://ga.rice.edu/non-traditional-students/second-four-year-bachelors-degree-alumni/) (<https://ga.rice.edu/non-traditional-students/second-four-year-bachelors-degree-alumni/>) page.