Choosing A Major

All undergraduates need to complete a major in order to graduate. Double majors, minors and specializations are elective options. Students must complete all of their degree requirements without exceeding UCLA’s unit maximum of 216 + AP units.

For a list of majors, minors and specializations as well as individual major requirements, consult the UCLA General Catalog available from www.registrar.ucla.edu. Letters and Science students who wish to pursue a major offered by a different school must transfer to that school. They should consult with an academic advisor with that school about admission procedures and course planning.

How Majors Work

In general, students must complete preparation courses, often called the “pre-major” before being able to declare the major itself. “Pre-major” requirements vary but are generally between 3-14 classes. Most departments have a GPA requirement for pre-major requirements. In general, students who have completed the pre-major coursework with the appropriate GPA need only go to the relevant department and fill out a declaration of major form. However several majors (Business-Economics, Communication Studies, and Cybernetics, etc.) require students to apply to the major. Students should check with their prospective major department for rules on declaring the major.

How Much Time to Decide

Students are encouraged to take courses during first and second year to explore a variety of areas of study. However, students should aim to declare their major before the end of their second year. Students pursuing long or highly sequential majors should begin pre-major coursework early. Some departments have unit maximum rules and will not allow students into the major who have exceeded that unit total. Consult individual departmental rules regarding maximum units for declaring the major.

Students planning to double-major should complete the pre-major requirements for both majors before reaching 120 units.

Factors to Consider

Intellectual Commitment

Students should strive to find a major that they find intellectually rewarding. Students are most successful in majors they enjoy and find interesting. It is important to remain motivated to study within one’s major field over several years.

Skills

Students should consider majors that play on their strengths or areas of curiosity and which will also allow them to work on any weaknesses they have. Different majors emphasize different kinds of skills (e.g. laboratory work, class participation, critical reading, writing, quantitative analysis, memorization, language proficiency, test-taking).

Career Goals

In general, UCLA offers liberal arts degrees which are not oriented toward particular occupations. However, students are encouraged to consult with the Career Center to work on developing their career goals in tandem with their academic studies. Students interested in graduate or professional school should consult with a Counseling Assistant, the Career Center, relevant faculty in their prospective field of graduate study and particular programs to learn how to best prepare themselves. Often graduate programs draw students from a variety of majors.
Factors to Consider (Cont.)

Outside Expectations

While the choice of major is ultimately an individual decision, most students need to consider the expectations of their families or communities, especially those who rely on others for financial support. Students should try to develop their own reasons for choosing a major and to keep in mind that outside expectations may be a relevant but not necessarily decisive consideration.

The Major at UCLA

Specific requirements and departmental characteristics vary at UCLA. Some departments offer smaller courses, seminars or research opportunities while others rely almost exclusively on lecture courses. Some majors are easily combined with a year of study abroad while others can be more difficult. Some majors are more flexible than others in terms of course requirements. Students should consult the catalog, take exploratory coursework, meet with academic advisors, and attend major-related workshops to learn about different majors at UCLA.

Resources to Help You

Letters and Science Counseling Assistants. A-316 Murphy Hall, Window #1. See us at: www.college.ucla.edu/up/counseling or chat with a CA (3-4, M-F & 7-8, M-Th.) from: www.my.ucla.edu

College Academic Counselors. A316 Murphy Hall, Window #2.


Academic Advancement Program Counselors. 1209 Campbell Hall. www.college.ucla.edu/up/aap

Honors Program Counselors. A-311 Murphy Hall. www.college.ucla.edu/up/honors

Covel Commons Workshops. 203 Covel. Schedules and sign-ups can be accessed from: www.my.ucla.edu

Education Abroad Program (EAP). B300 Murphy Hall. www.isop.ucla.edu/eap

Professors and Teaching Assistants. Because they teach particular courses and have a broad knowledge of their respective area of study, Professors and TAs can be a good resource for information on what the major is about, the nature of the discipline and what careers previous students in the major may have pursued.

Career Center. 2nd and 3rd Floors, Strathmore Building. 501 Westwood Plaza www.career.ucla.edu

Alumni Career Network Program. James West Alumni Center. www.career.ucla.edu/alumni

This Alumni contact program provides a database with thousands of Alumni available to talk to students about their careers and education listed by major, occupation and region.

The full text of this booklet can be found in PDF form at: http://www.ugeducation.ucla.edu/counseling//CA/Publications/Major-Booklet.pdf

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