

Major Study Programs

A major study program is a coherent array of courses designed to develop mastery of the basic ideas and skills in a particular field or area. Every candidate for a bachelor's degree must complete such a program. The major study may be an established departmental program, an established combined program, or an individually planned program.

The choice of a major can be made at any time after the student has been admitted to the college, but must be made before the end of the second semester of the sophomore year. Transfer students entering with junior standing may be eligible for a one-semester extension to this deadline. The selection of a major should be made in consultation with the student's pre-major advisor and the advisor or advisors for the proposed major study.

Types of Majors

Standard Majors

Whitman College offers departmental major study programs in the areas listed as follows. Departments also may provide an option for emphasis within the major.

Anthropology	Economics	
Art	English	Philosophy
Art History	Ethics and Society	Physics
Astronomy	French and Francophone Studies	Politics
Biology	Geology	Psychology
Chemistry	German Studies	Religion
Chinese	Hispanic Studies	Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse
Classics	History	Sociology
Classical Studies	Japanese	Theater
Computer Science	Mathematics	
	Music	

Combined Majors

A combined major study program integrates work from two or more departments, from a department and one or more of the extra-departmental teaching areas, or from two teaching areas within a department, to provide concentration in an area of study. The faculty have established combined major study programs in the following areas:

Anthropology-Environmental Studies	Economics-Environmental Studies	Mathematics-Physics
Anthropology+French	Economics-Mathematics	Mathematics-Statistics
Art-Environmental Studies	Environmental Humanities	Physics-Astronomy
Astronomy-Geology	Film and Media Studies	Physics-Environmental Studies
Biochemistry, Biophysics, and Molecular Biology	Gender Studies	Politics-Environmental Studies
Biology-Environmental Studies	Geology-Computer Science	Psychology+French
Biology+French	Geology-Environmental Studies	Religion+French

Biology-Geology	Geology+French	Sociology-Environmental Studies
Brain, Behavior, and Cognition	Geology-Physics	Sociology+French
Chemistry-Environmental Studies	History- Environmental Studies	South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
Chemistry-Geology	Indigeneity, Race, and Ethnicity Studies	

Specific requirements for each of the established major study programs may be found by referring to the respective departmental listing in the *Courses of Instruction* section of this catalog. The requirements that apply to a student are those published in the most recent edition of this catalog at the time a student completes the second semester of their sophomore year or, in the case of junior-level transfer students, the catalog for the year of entrance to the college. These requirements may be altered as necessary in individual cases by the departments with the approval of the Board of Review.

Individually Planned Majors

In addition to the combined major, an individually planned major study program may be developed by students with unique interests and intentions. The individually planned major permits the development of a concentrated study in some area which crosses two or more disciplines, or which currently does not offer a standard major, thus permitting an area of concentration not available in other major study programs. During a student's second semester of their sophomore year, or equivalent, a student must select a major committee consisting of at least three faculty advisors (at least two of whom must be tenured or tenure-track) appropriate for the proposed major. With the guidance of the advisory committee, the student must specify the requirements for a coherent major study program and develop a rationale. The rationale must clearly demonstrate the need for an individually planned major rather than an established combined major or a departmental major and minor. Moreover, the proposed individually planned major must be approved by the Board of Review and subsequently assessed by the Curriculum Committee. Additional requirements appear in *Guidelines for the Construction of an Individually Planned Major*, available from the Registrar's Office.

General Major Requirements

Regardless of whether the student declares a standard, combined, or individually planned major, a minimum of two-thirds of the specific course and credit requirements for the major must be completed in the on-campus program of the college, and a minimum cumulative grade-point average of 2.000 must be earned by a student in all of the courses taken within the department or departments of their major study. A student with a combined major must maintain a GPA of at least 2.000 in each subject area of the major. A student with an individually planned major must maintain a GPA of at least 2.000 in the courses specified in the major.

A program of study is prepared with the advice and consent of the student's major advisor or advisory committee to ensure that all major and degree requirements are completed. At an appropriate time during the student's senior year, the major department or major committee certifies that the degree candidate has completed an acceptable program of study.

Senior Assessment

Every candidate for a bachelor's degree must, in their senior year or subsequently, complete a senior assessment in the field of the major study.

The examination may be entirely oral, or it may be part written and part oral. The advanced tests of the Graduate Record Examination, if taken during the senior year, may be used in partial satisfaction of the written major examination. Major examinations when passed are graded "passed" or "passed with distinction." A student who fails to pass the major examination may take a second examination, but not before two weeks after the first examination. A candidate who fails to pass the second examination is not eligible to take another until three months have elapsed.