

A PROSPECTIVE-STUDENT INTRODUCTION TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON'S LIBERAL-ARTS COLLEGE

The College of Letters & Science

In the College of Letters & Science, you earn your bachelor's degree through your own customized mix of classes where you explore your interests and discover new ones.

Letters & Science bachelor's degrees are based in the liberal arts

Open-ended curiosity and life-changing experiences

Think of *liberal* as “free, unrestricted,” and *arts* as “skills-knowledge” (like the culinary arts). In education, this means freely learning across different disciplines:

- **social sciences**, understanding humans and their interactions in societies, institutions, and systems;
- **humanities**, understanding humans as thinkers, citizens, and creators of art, literature, and culture;
- **natural sciences**, systematic study of the natural and physical world, and the use of abstraction and logical reasoning.

Whether your main interests are chemistry or poetry or law or data, your degree will include classes in the three groups listed above, an understanding of at least one language other than English, and other components.

You have a lot of flexibility in the classes you choose, based on your interests. The goal is a full liberal-arts education that gives you options, inspiration, and the tools to live well, make a difference in your community, and flourish in your career.



How are students admitted into the College of Letters & Science?

Students who select any Letters & Science major (listed in the [Guide](#) and on the next page) or “Undeclared (L&S)” as their primary intended major on the university application will start with the College of Letters & Science as their academic home.

AP & other incoming credit

Some classes completed *before* UW–Madison may be counted as part of a degree. The **Office of the Registrar** (keeper of student records) manages this process and the UW equivalents.

registrar.wisc.edu/credit-by-exam

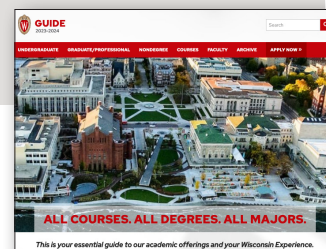
The Guide:

UW–Madison's academic handbook

guide.wisc.edu

Browse the catalog of degrees, majors, certificates, and courses.

Learn about academic policies and the components and requirements of degrees and majors.



Your major

The major is about a quarter of your classes.

It's not your whole degree.

Majors are the part of your Letters & Science degree where you dig deeper into a subject.

You declare (officially select) a major after you begin college, when you are ready and eligible. In Letters & Science, you are not limited to a major that you indicate in your college application.

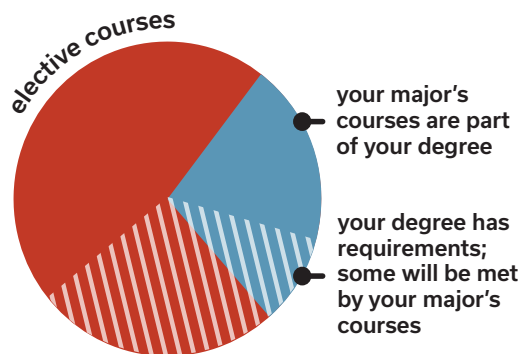
It's fine to be undecided right now: there is so much more to discover in college.

Can I change my major?

Yes! Allow enough time to complete the new major's required classes before graduation.

Can I have more than one major?

Yes! Many Letters & Science students discover deep interests in more than one subject.



Majors in the College of Letters & Science

African American Studies	Chinese	Information Science	Neurobiology
African Cultural Studies	Classical Humanities	International Studies	Philosophy
Anthropology	Communication Arts	Italian	Physics
Applied Mathematics, Engineering, and Physics	Communication Sciences and Disorders	Japanese	Polish
Art History	Computer Sciences	Jewish Studies	Political Science
Asian Languages & Cultures	Conservation Biology	Journalism	Portuguese
Astronomy—Physics	Conservation Biology	Landscape and Urban Studies	Psychology
Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences	Data Science	Landscape Architecture	Religious Studies
Biochemistry	Economics	Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies	Russian
Biology	English	Legal Studies	Scandinavian Studies
Botany	Environmental Sciences	Linguistics	Social Welfare
Cartography and Geographic Information Systems	Environmental Studies	Mathematics	Social Work
Chemistry	French	Molecular and Cell Biology	Sociology
Chican@ & Latin@ Studies	Gender and Women's Studies	Music	Spanish
	Geography	Music: Education	Statistics
	Geology and Geophysics	Music: Performance	Zoology
	German		
	History		

And there is variety and range within each of these subject areas!

Certificates

UW–Madison is different from other universities by offering certificates: our version of a *minor*. These are optional programs with about **half the classes of a major**.

Certificates can focus on proficiency in one area, like “Italian” or “Physics,” or blend classes together in new ways, like the certificates in “Political Economy, Philosophy, and Politics” or “Health and the Humanities.”

Certificates are a great way to develop expertise in different interest areas, as an alternative to an additional major.

The College of Letters & Science offers about 50 certificates; L&S students are also eligible for about 30 certificates managed by other UW–Madison colleges. Find them all in the *Guide*:

guide.wisc.edu/explore-majors/

Classes

Combining academic goals with personal interests

Classes are the best part! The College of Letters & Science offers a huge range of classes every semester: from introductory topics to advanced investigation.

A *credit* is a measurement roughly based on the weekly meetings and amount of study time needed outside of class. Students generally take four or five classes, averaging about 15 credits, per semester.

Many classes have about 20 students. Larger lecture classes often have other meetings in the week for small-group discussions or a hands-on lab.



Enroll in your first-semester classes during SOAR orientation

Professors and other instructors

Ready to share enthusiasm and knowledge with you

An advantage of UW–Madison is that our extremely talented professors are proud to be at this university, teaching and conducting high-level research.

Professors design your classes and set the educational direction of each subject area. They bring their expertise to classes from 1-credit seminars for new freshmen to graduate-level study.

Other talented instructors lead classes, too: skillful teachers who have deep knowledge in their topics and *love* to help students get the most out of their learning. And, like at most universities, graduate-student teaching assistants are sometimes part of a course's instructional team.

Research

Students at UW–Madison are fortunate to have access to some of the world's leading researchers who push the frontiers of knowledge in all academic areas. Joining a faculty-led research team is a life-changing experience for many L&S students.

Your own hands-on research is a regular component of majors in all disciplines, not just science but also the humanities, arts, and social sciences. Research is a big part of earning Honors in the Major (open to any student; read more about the L&S Honors Program on the next page).

Undergraduate Research Scholars is just one opportunity for research: a two-semester program for about 180 first-year students. Students meet in a small seminar class, and work a few hours a week on an existing UW–Madison research project.

urs.ls.wisc.edu

Advising

You make the decisions that fit your academic plan: we'll help you know your options.

Academic advisors are experts who help you explore UW–Madison courses and understand the components of your degree. They help you find learning support, tutoring, activities, and services that enhance your college experience.

You connect with your advising team at SOAR, the orientation for all incoming students. Your assigned advisor will have a broad knowledge of courses, majors, and certificates.

After you declare a major, your primary academic advising shifts to an advisor in that major's department who specializes in its requirements and opportunities.

UW–Madison has specialist advisors for students interested in future study in medicine and health professions, law, business, and more.

Learning Support

Get the most from your classes

Every student can sharpen their skills. From comprehensive tutoring programs to specialty centers for **Writing, Chemistry, Math, Physics, Computer Science, and Statistics**, you will find many ways to learn with, and from, others.

learningsupport.wisc.edu

Study Abroad

As a university with a global influence, we have **260 study-abroad programs in 65 countries**. These vary in length, academic focus, teaching format, language requirements, cost, and level of independence. There are programs to complement every major and all meet UW–Madison's high academic standards.

studyabroad.wisc.edu

Career services

SuccessWorks, the L&S career center, gives you access to professional skills and support staff from your first year on campus through graduation. SuccessWorks provides career advising; helps you find jobs and internships; and hosts career-exploration communities with themes like “Communications, Entertainment, and the Arts” and “Government, Policy, International Affairs, and Law.”

Our strong, connected network of **thousands of Badger alumni** regularly come to campus to talk about their work, hire interns, give career advice, and support students in so many ways.

successworks.wisc.edu

Scholarships

Letters & Science has limited scholarships for first-year students. There is no application: they are awarded based on information already received through the college application process. Most scholarships are for students *after* their first year of classes.

scholarships.ls.wisc.edu

UW–Madison’s **Office of Student Financial Aid** are the experts on all the options for funding college.

financialaid.wisc.edu

First-Year Interest Groups

FIGs are clusters of three Fall-semester UW–Madison classes, linked together to explore a common theme—choose from more than 60 themes. At the heart of each FIG is a top-notch professor who develops and leads a seminar class exclusively for the 20 students in your FIG. The seminar is connected to two complementary UW classes that you attend together with your FIG classmates, combining and expanding what you learn in these other classes with the main FIG seminar. All FIG classes fulfill graduation requirements.

During SOAR orientation, talk with your academic advisor about which FIGs fit your interests before enrolling in your classes.

figs.wisc.edu

Interested in biology?
Biocore Honors
biocore.wisc.edu

L&S Honors Program

College classes are designed for you to participate, be committed to learning, and embrace new perspectives and ideas—Honors classes have *even more* of this. It’s a great fit for students who enjoy active class discussions with both classmates and the teacher, and who want to dig deeper into the topics. Choose *Honors in the Liberal Arts* or, after declaring a major, *Honors in the Major*.

The program also offers tailored academic advising, special events, and scholarships and grants just for Honors students.

No previous secondary-school Honors experience is required.

Apply after you have been admitted into the College of Letters & Science. All incoming L&S students may apply. The Honors in the Liberal Arts application is an online form with a few short essays; no transcripts or other documents are submitted.

honors.ls.wisc.edu

Residential Learning Communities

Live in a University Housing residence hall with its own UW course and activities—only for the students who live in the RLC—based on a theme like biology; environment & sustainability; business & entrepreneurship; multiculturalism; international cultures & languages; gender & sexuality; and arts & creativity. The Chadbourne RLC takes a wider view to explore what it means to be a liberal-arts educated person.

It’s a lot of fun to learn, discuss, and study with the people you live with. These classes are taught by some of our most praised and experienced professors. RLCs also organize special events, faculty guests, field trips, and many ways for students to create their community on campus.

When you sign up for Housing (go.wisc.edu/my-housing), select your preferred RLC and choose “learning communities” as your priority for hall preferences.

housing.wisc.edu