Planning Your Studies at SF State

The baccalaureate degree includes General Education (GE) requirements, other university graduation requirements, an academic major, perhaps a minor or second major, and elective course work. Students, with the aid of advisors, combine these elements in a creative and thoughtful way. By taking the time to create a meaningful degree program, students will not only graduate in a timely manner, but will benefit from the opportunity to take personal responsibility for their own learning.

Check out your level of readiness.

If you begin college at SF State and are not exempt, you must take required entry-level tests (ELM/EPT) before your first semester to ensure that your skills in mathematics and English are at a college level. Any required remediation must be completed in one year.

Use GE to learn about yourself and your world.

If you are unsure about what you want your major to be, it is a good idea to spend your first semesters exploring different options. GE allows you to learn about different subjects.

It's OK to be undeclared.

A large percentage of incoming first-time college students have not yet declared their major. Take time to explore the possibilities. Meet with an advisor in the Undergraduate Advising Center (http://advising.sfsu.edu) and use SF State services, such as the Office of Career Services & Leadership Development (http://careerservices.sfsu.edu), to help you find the right major. First-time college students need to declare a major before completing 70 units.

It's OK to change your major.

Most students change their major at least once while in college. If you find that the major you have chosen is not right for you, explore other options. You will probably find that there are many more choices than you have ever encountered.

General Education and major requirements may sometimes overlap.

Most majors include courses that meet both GE and major requirements. This is referred to as “duplicate use of credit” or simply “double-counting.” By choosing certain courses, you can satisfy both GE and major requirements. For some majors, you can also meet GE requirements through “met in major”. Refer to your major to see if there are any GE requirements that might be “met in major”.

When you have decided on a major, make a tentative plan for your remaining semesters at SF State.

Many departments will provide you with an advising worksheet so you can keep track of your progress. Most majors have sample “roadmaps” that show a possible pathway to graduation. You can also refer to your Degree Progress Report, found in your Student Center, in order to track your progress towards completing your major.

Plan your program in consultation with an advisor.

Review your advising worksheet or roadmap frequently and meet with an advisor on a regular basis. Go to your major department and request an advisor or, if you are undeclared, or thinking about changing your major, meet with an advisor in the Undergraduate Advising Center (http://advising.sfsu.edu).

Bring your advising materials to your advising sessions. (Unofficial transcripts, Degree Progress Report [DPR], Advanced Standing Evaluation Form [ASE], if applicable, etc.).

This SF State Bulletin is the most complete source of information regarding graduation requirements and university policies and procedures. Use this Bulletin to help choose a major and to determine course content and prerequisites.

Use the online Class Schedule to determine which courses are offered each semester. At the Web site, https://webapps.sfsu.edu/public/classservices/classsearch, you will also find an academic calendar and information on tests and deadlines. Some departments provide advance information on future course offerings, either online or in departmental offices.

Degree Progress Report (DPR) is an advising document created to inform students how courses have been accepted toward GE and other graduation requirements. Students should review their DPR after each semester’s grades are recorded in order to monitor progress in completing requirements and to resolve errors and/or complete deficiencies. DPRs can be found by logging onto the SF State Gateway (http://gateway.sfsu.edu) and going to the Student Center.

Advanced Standing Evaluation (ASE): Some students who began their studies at SF State prior to Fall 2014, may have an ASE that records transfer coursework that does not appear on the Degree Progress Report. In addition, students readmitting to SF State Fall 2014 and after, may also have an ASE for previously transferred and evaluated coursework. In this case, students will see that they have “legacy units” recorded in the Transfer Credit Report in the Student Center. These “legacy units” show on the ASE. If the units meet GE or graduation requirements, the ASE will show that was well. The ASE must be used with the DPR to understand the GE and other graduation requirements that have been met. Students can request a copy of their ASE from the Registrar at the One Stop in the Student Services Building.

Transcripts of SF State and Transfer Institutions assist students and advisors in determining that prerequisites have been met, that skills are sufficiently developed, and that courses have been taken appropriately for the degree. Bring copies of transcripts when meeting with advisors to help monitor progress and determine the best path toward the degree.

Major and Minor Requirements Worksheets and Roadmaps provide information to assist students in fulfilling requirements. Many departments publish flowcharts and graphic illustrations of prerequisite structures to help in planning. Often worksheets include details in addition to what is found in the Bulletin and also provide space for advisor verification of course equivalencies in the major/minor.

Pay careful attention to course prerequisites.

Be sure to take courses in the proper sequence. Included in this Bulletin is a description of all courses offered at SF State (bulletin.sfsu.edu/courses). If you need prior experience or exposure to a subject as background to a course, prerequisite requirements are listed which must be taken before you can take that course.

Discuss effective use of elective credit with your advisor.

You may use these elective units to fulfill prerequisites for graduate school, develop a specific competency (for example, foreign language or computer skills), or to enrich your life and expand your understanding.

Take advantage of as many opportunities as possible while in college.

If you plan your education well, you will find time to participate in internships, student organizations, and many other programs and services available at SF State. In most majors, you can spend a semester or a year studying at a university in another country; the staff in the Office of International Programs
(http://oip.sfsu.edu) will help you plan both your academic program and your finances if you would like to study abroad.

**Go at your own speed.**

Take care of the basic skills first. Most students work while attending SF State and therefore may not graduate in the typical eight semesters. Each student should take the number of units that is consistent with his/her specific family, work, and social obligations.

Most majors consist of approximately 45 units. If a student is earning a B.A. degree, the following is a sample unit breakdown. This example assumes no duplicate use of credit (“double counting”) between the major and GE requirements. The distribution will be slightly different for transfer students. An average of 15 units per semester will be needed to complete the degree in eight semesters.

Most B.S. degrees can also be completed in 120 units, but in some programs, a student will need more than 120 units. An average of 16.5 units per semester will be needed to complete the degree in eight semesters.

**How is transfer credit evaluated for GE?**

Transfer students from California Community College or California State University campuses will be given credit for general education requirements which their former institutions certify as completed. Transfers from other public or private colleges will be given appropriate GE credit as determined by SF State evaluators.

**Can I earn GE credit for college-level learning that I acquired through prior work or life experience?**

Yes, that may be possible. The CEEL (Credit by Evaluation for Experiential Learning) Program provides a way of earning General Education, elective, and, in some cases, major credit for those students who have acquired prior college-level learning for which no college credit has been awarded. To obtain further information about CEEL, contact the Undergraduate Advising Center (http://advising.sfsu.edu).

**Should I carefully plan my GE program?**

Yes. Some courses may not be offered every semester. Exceptions to GE requirements are considered only under unusual and extenuating circumstances.