

## **UVM Co-Major Undergraduate Academic Credential Institutional Guidance (12.6.23)**

**Co-Major definition:** A secondary cross-college/school major that students can pursue which is noted on the undergraduate student's transcript as a "co-major".

**Central, guiding principles:** Among the best possible outcomes, co-majors will (1) provide to undergraduate students an opportunity to gain depth of knowledge in more than one major field of study that would serve their overall educational and post-graduation goals; and (2) provide to our programs a bridge between colleges/schools to develop innovative pathways for students' academic success in more than one discipline and advancement to employment, graduate study, or other post-graduate goals.

**Outcomes to avoid:** Co-majors should not entice academically successful and motivated students to act against their own interests (e.g., by spreading them too thin, foreclosing other opportunities that would be more applicable to their goals [internships, student research, study abroad], exposing them to loss of financial aid, reducing employment potential, etc.). Nor should they create unachievable expectations in students. Depending on the student and the student's circumstances, it could be preferable for them to pursue a certificate or a minor or even an individually designed major rather than a co-major. A fifth-year master's is an additional option for some students.

### **Key terms:**

1. **Home unit:** The unit in which a student will receive their degree. For example, the home unit of a student pursuing a BA in Political Science, or a BS in Psychological Science is CAS; the home unit of a student pursuing a degree in Business Administration is GSB.
2. **Sponsoring unit:** The unit offering a co-major. CAS would be the sponsoring unit for a Spanish co-major; CEMS would be the sponsoring unit for a Math co-major.
3. **Co-major:** a major available to students in a college/school at UVM where they are *not* pursuing a degree. (e.g., the co-major in Spanish would be available to students in GSB, CALS, RSEN, CESS, CNHS, and CEMS; CAS students could pursue Spanish as their sole major or as a double major, not as a co-major.

### **General Guidelines**

The following are general guidelines for co-majors:

1. Undergraduate co-majors should offer UVM students an opportunity to combine academic offerings across units. Students may not do a co-major offered within their own degree-granting unit.
2. Each co-major is administered by one sponsoring academic unit which will be responsible for maintaining program quality.

3. It is recommended that no more than two courses can overlap (or ‘double dip’) from the co-major to another major/minor, in order to ensure that these remain truly distinct offerings, however participating units will still make the determination for their own major/minor offerings the degree of overlap allowed. Sponsoring units should articulate the expectations for the co-major. In the MOU, Associate Deans from a participating units should outline if there are restrictions with any specific major pairings.
4. Co-majors share with the existing major a clearly stated mission, program goals, learning objectives and desired student outcomes. The curriculum must be scaffolded in such a way as to foster developmental growth of the student over the course of the co-major.
5. Co-majors must be at least 30 credits of academic courses, at least 12 of which must be at the 2000-level or higher.
6. If an existing major is 30-36 credits, the co-major would have the same course and credit expectations as the major. If an existing major is substantially more than 40 credits, then the sponsoring unit(s) must propose a new 30-40 credit version of that major, available only as a co-major to students in other units (and not to students in the home unit).
7. Co-majors are not to be required for any degree program.
8. There may be a few co-majors that aren’t available for pairing with all majors; MOUs should articulate if there are any pairings within a participating unit that will not be allowed and this language should also be stated in the course catalog.
9. No more than 50% of the total credits for a co-major may be transfer credits.
10. In order for the co-major to appear on a student’s transcript as successfully completed, students must meet the minimum grade point average (GPA) and other college requirements as specified by the co-major’s sponsoring academic unit. Co-majors will have their own code in Banner and will appear on the student’s degree audit.
11. Unsuccessful completion of a co-major will not prevent a student from graduating and will not be recorded on the transcript.
12. The Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate shall review proposals for co-majors with respect to these standards and criteria.

### **Approval Processes**

**All co-majors require a formal proposal:** To create co-major, the sponsoring unit (Department and School/College) will prepare a proposal following the format posted to the curricular resources page of the Faculty Senate website. The routing process is as follows:

- a. Department or Program
- b. Unit Curriculum Committee approval (including all required College/School votes)
- c. Associate Dean or Dean approval (including signed MOU)

- d. Provost approval
- e. 15 day circulation
- f. Faculty Senate CAC approval
- g. Faculty Senate notification
- h. Board of Trustees notification

Approved co-majors will be listed in the catalog. Therefore, any co-major proposal must be approved by the CAC no later than the March CAC meeting of the year prior to the catalog year for which the co-major will be available to students. CAC meetings are the first Thursday of every month.

**MOUs required for co-majors:** In the pilot phase of implementation, which will be the first three years, all proposals must come with signed MOUs between the sponsoring unit and the other units that will allow their students to pursue the co-major, negotiated through the Associate Deans of those units. These MOUs must follow the template posted on the curricular resources page of the Faculty Senate website. This success and challenges of co-major credential and its implementation will be assessed by the CAC in the fall of the fourth year after the first co-majors are launched, i.e. in fall semester 2027.

### **Operational Guidelines**

**Application and admission to co-majors:** Admissions will be handled by the sponsoring unit; students will have to apply to add a co-major and will not be approved to add the co-major until they have met with an advisor from both the home unit and the sponsoring unit. The sponsoring unit(s) will notify the student and the home unit (the college or school of the student's major) of acceptance/rejection, or of the declaration of the new co-major. The decision to reject an application would be based on two criteria: ability of the student to complete major requirements and graduate in a timely manner, and previous GPA performance in major classes and likelihood that the candidate could meet GPA requirements for successful completion of the major.

**Catalog description:** Co-majors will be described in detail in the UVM Catalog and specify whether there are any major pairings that are not allowable.

**Commitment:** Sponsoring units will ensure that the curricular components of the co-major are available on a regular basis so that students can complete their co-major in a timely manner.

**Advising:** The sponsoring unit will develop and maintain an effective system of advising for all students enrolled in its co-majors. Home units will have at least one student services advisor who has expertise in co-major advising, to be the point person for questions from their students. That advising should include careful consideration of possible impacts of a co-major on financial aid awards.

**Major codes:** Once a co-major has been approved, the sponsoring unit will work with the Registrar to identify a unique code for the co-major (so that it has its own academic record and can appear on the degree audit). A co-major would receive its own major code within Banner;

the Registrar will use a structure that begins with the number 2, followed by 2 or 3 characters that make it unique. Thus, for Spanish, the primary major code (SPAN) would be for the major, with a second code for the co-major (2SPA). This structure will allow easy querying to find students with co-majors. Examples include:

- 2EE: Co-major: Elec Engr
- 2PSY: Co-major: Psyc Science
- 2MTH: Co-major: Mathematics

**Banner limitations:** Banner has some absolute limitations: a student can only have two curriculum records and a curriculum record can only have two majors. A curriculum record is the degree the student is seeking, so a BA, BS, MA, etc. Majors, co-majors, and second degrees must exist within these limits. Where do the limitations set in?

- A CAS student is pursuing a double major in PSYS and SOC for the BA degree (one degree record: the BA, with two majors). The student decides to pursue a co-major in HDF. Assuming HDF exists as a co-major for the BA degree in CAS, a second CAS BA curriculum record must be created to hold the HDF co-major code. (Curriculum record 1 has the PSYS and SOC majors for the BA, curriculum record 2 is for the HDF co-major). If the student subsequently decides to change to PSYS BS, there are still options. (Curriculum record 1 is the CAS BA with a Sociology major and HDF co-major; curriculum record 2 is the CAS BS in PSYS.) If instead the student wants to pursue an AMP in PSYS, we are out of luck; we have used up the two curriculum records (one for the two PSYS/SOC majors, one for the HDF co-major), and there are no options to have a third curriculum record.

This example is extreme, but as more students enter UVM as sophomores due to AP/dual enrollment programs, they are more likely to pack as much into their educational experience as possible so careful advising and understanding the limitations is key.

**Certification and student records:** The sponsoring unit shall certify student completion. The sponsoring unit is the only body authorized to make course substitutions for satisfying the co-major requirements and shall notify the student's home unit in writing regarding any substitutions. The student's home unit major advisor is not authorized to make course substitutions in co-major requirements. As with all credentialed academic programs, co-majors will be indicated as such in students' transcripts. If the student does not successfully complete the co-major, and it needs to be removed from the student record, the Registrar's Office will process that request coming from the student's student service team in their home unit.

**Alteration of co-major:** Alterations to co-majors made by the major's home unit and which meet or exceed the noted criteria must be submitted for review by the Curricular Affairs Committee as described in *Format for Proposals to Substantially Revise an Existing Academic Program*.

**Financial Aid & Timelines to graduation**

Pursuit of a co-major should not demand that students extend their studies at UVM beyond the normal expectations for graduation. This has two core elements:

1. Completion of a co-major should not extend a student's time towards graduation; if additional semesters are required to complete the co-major, the student should be advised against pursuing the co-major.
2. Completion of a co-major should not force a student to additional credits beyond those required needed to graduate. Eligibility for most undergraduate scholarships and financial aid ends once the student has completed all requirements to earn a Bachelor's Degree. Co-majors do not extend financial aid eligibility. If all requirements for graduation with a single major have been met, a student would not be eligible for financial aid for those credits needed to complete the co-major.

Students co-majoring in programs which have different GPA standards under the University's Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress standards shall be held to the higher of the two standards and will be required to meet that higher standard to remain eligible for financial aid.