

MUSIC (BA)

College of Arts and Sciences

Program Website (<http://music.cornell.edu>)

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Program Description

The Department of Music offers training in the study, creation, and performance of a broad spectrum of music. Course offerings reflect the breadth of faculty expertise, which ranges across global and local musical practices and repertoires including Western art music in all periods, African and Afro-Caribbean music, East and Southeast Asian music, jazz, pop music, improvisation, experimentalism, sound art, electronic music, and digital game music.

The major in music (<https://music.cornell.edu/major/>) provides avenues for students to capitalize on the experiences and training that they bring to the program as well as opportunities to engage deeply with unfamiliar sounds, traditions, and ways of thinking and behaving musically. As a Bachelor of Arts degree, it equips students with a liberal arts education and emphasizes music as a historically situated and culturally embedded human activity entangled with personal identities, social structures, psychological states, and aesthetic ideals. Music majors gain an array of analytical, historical, argumentative, creative, and performative skills that provide a solid foundation for career paths as musicians and scholars as well as in business, law, and other professional endeavors.

Music Major Course Areas and Specializations

As a music major, you will take courses in three areas: Materials and Techniques (MT), History and Culture (HC), and Performance and Lessons (PL). Visit this page to view Music Courses in category music courses (<https://music.cornell.edu/general-overview-music-courses/>).

- HC courses situate musical practices or repertoires in their historical and cultural contexts. This involves studying how music frames, constructs, and reflects personal, social, political, and philosophical dynamics, and how musical values vary according to time and place.
- MT courses are primarily concerned with how music works, involving both the sonic and conceptual elements that compose it and the techniques with which they can be combined and manipulated. Some of these courses focus on creative methods while others teach analytical skills.
- PL courses focus on the expressive and auditory skills required to perform music at a high level. Such courses typically emphasize students' musical growth, involving the broadening of horizons as well as the acquisition of advanced techniques.

As your studies progress, you can develop specializations by pursuing sequences of courses that investigate topics in greater depth. Our numerous ensembles (see "Performance" tab) provide practical experience and training in collaborative music making, and our lessons program ("Performance" tab) offers individual instruction at the highest level. Advanced students may apply to undertake an Honors Project (<https://music.cornell.edu/honors-projects/>) during their final year. There are also opportunities to get involved in arts outreach and organization in both local and international contexts.

Our major curriculum is designed to ensure students come away from their music studies at Cornell with the ability to apply practical and theoretical knowledge within and across musical traditions; the capacity to listen critically, openly, and deeply to support analysis, study, and collaboration; and the ability to think critically and communicate creatively across social, cultural, and artistic differences.

Honors Program

- The Honors criteria described here will start for all graduates in the 2026-2027 academic year
- Latin Honors will replace Distinction in All Subjects and will be awarded at the college-level based on final cumulative GPA
- Major honors will be denoted as "Honors in Music" and will involve only one level of honors

Completing the music major with honors offers outstanding music students the opportunity for advanced, independent research that results in a substantial scholarly thesis, an extended music-making project, or a combination of these. For many students, the sustained, original work undertaken for honors over the course of their senior year is the most challenging and rewarding study they pursue as undergraduates at Cornell. Successfully completing honors provides students with an extended piece of critical writing or portfolio that can be of great value to applications to graduate programs and also constitutes a substantial scholarly or creative achievement in its own right.

For more information about honors, please visit the Music Department's website (<http://music.cornell.edu/major/#honors>).

Nonmajors

In addition to its performing, instructional, and concert activities, the department offers numerous courses for nonmajors, many of which carry no prerequisites and presuppose no previous formal training in music. Consult the following course listings, and for further information consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Undergraduate Coordinator (fn32@cornell.edu).

Musical Performance and Concerts

Musical performance is an integral part of Cornell's cultural life and an essential part of its undergraduate academic programs in music. The department encourages music-making through its offerings in individual instruction and through musical organizations and ensembles that are directed and trained by members of the faculty. Students from all colleges and departments of the university join with music majors and minors in all of these ensembles. Students may participate in musical organizations and ensembles throughout the year. Permission of the instructor is required, and admission is by audition only (usually at the beginning of each semester), except that the Cornell Gamelan Ensemble, Deixa Sambar and Steel Band are open to all students without prior audition. Membership in these musical ensembles is also open to qualified students who wish to participate.

Vocal ensembles:

- [MUSIC 3602 Chorus](#)
- [MUSIC 3603 Glee Club](#)
- [MUSIC 3604 Chorale](#)

Instrumental ensembles:

- [MUSIC 3610 Cornell Gamelan Ensemble](#)
- [MUSIC 3613 Cornell Steel Band](#)
- [MUSIC 3615 Jazz Repertory Ensemble](#)
- [MUSIC 3616 Cornell Hip-Hop Collective](#)
- [MUSIC 3621 Cornell Symphony Orchestra](#)
- [MUSIC 3631 Cornell Wind Symphony](#)
- [MUSIC 3634 Cornell Percussion Group](#)
- [MUSIC 3660 Music Improvisation Ensemble](#)
- [MUSIC 3701 Performing Chamber Music](#)
- [MUSIC 4615 Jazz Ensemble](#)
- [MUSIC 4616 Jazz Combo](#)
- [MUSIC 4621 Cornell Chamber Orchestra](#)
- [MUSIC 4631 Chamber Flute Ensemble](#)
- [MUSIC 4651 Chamber Music Ensemble](#)

Information about requirements and conditions for academic credit can be found in the following listings for the Department of Music. Announcements of auditions for vocal and instrumental ensembles are posted at music.cornell.edu/performance (<http://music.cornell.edu/performance/>) during registration each fall semester and, where appropriate, each spring semester as well.

Musical Instruction

Cornell faculty members offer individual instruction in voice, organ, harpsichord, piano and fortepiano, violin, viola, cello, percussion, and some brass and woodwind instruments to those students advanced enough to do college-level work in these instruments. Lessons are available by audition only. They may be taken for .5 credit (MUSIC 3511), 1 credit (MUSIC 3513), 2 credits (MUSIC 3514) or 3 credits (MUSIC 4501). For more information, please go to music.cornell.edu (<http://music.cornell.edu/>).

Lessons for beginners: The Department of Music does not offer lessons for beginners.

Auditions: Auditions are held at the beginning of each semester for lessons for advanced students. Contact the music department office in 101 Lincoln Hall for information.

Fees: For information about the fee structure for lessons, see the department's web site or contact the music department office. All fees are nonrefundable once lessons begin, even if the course is subsequently dropped.

Scholarships: Juniors and Senior Music majors are granted a waiver of one hour of lesson fees per semester. All scholarships are intended only for lessons in the student's primary performing medium. Scholarship/registration forms, available in the music department office, are to be returned to the office within the first three weeks of classes.

Facilities

Music Library. The Sidney Cox Library of Music and Dance in Lincoln Hall has an excellent collection containing periodicals, books, scores, parts, sound and video recordings, microforms, rare materials, and electronic resources. Its depth and breadth serve the needs of a wide variety of users on the campus and its listening and video viewing facilities are open to all members of the Cornell community.

Concert Halls. The Department of Music sponsors more than 150 concerts annually. Cornell's principal concert halls are Bailey Hall

Auditorium (about 1,400 seats), Sage Chapel (about 800), and Barnes Hall Auditorium (about 280).

Rehearsal Spaces and Practice Rooms. Departmental ensembles rehearse primarily in Lincoln Hall, Bailey Hall, Barnes Hall, and Sage Chapel. Twenty-six studios in Lincoln Hall are available for individual practice by pianists, vocalists, and instrumentalists who are members of the Cornell community. Of these, eight have grand pianos, five have upright pianos, and one has percussion instruments.

For information about access to the practice rooms, see music.cornell.edu/practice-rooms (<https://music.cornell.edu/practice-rooms/instrument-lockers/>) or contact the department office.

Instruments. Six concert grand pianos are available for performances in the various concert halls, plus several historical keyboard instruments, including fortepianos, harpsichords, and clavichords. Four distinctive organs are available to qualified individuals for lessons and practice. In addition, the music department owns a limited number of string, wind, and percussion instruments that may be used by members of the department's ensembles.

Cornell Electroacoustic Music Center (CEMC). The Cornell Electroacoustic Music Center comprises three project studios, a 14-workstation teaching lab in the Music Library, and a primary multichannel studio. Several live performance and recording rigs are also available, from hand-held to solid state. A combination of commercial and open-source software solutions service an array of student and faculty interests, including sound manipulation and sound specialization, live performance, multimedia, intelligent music systems (adaptive and algorithmic composition), music notation, sound art and experimentation, and high-resolution recording. The center operates its own web server with space for web hosting, data backup, and remote login. CEMC's facilities are state-of-the-art and can accommodate almost any creative inclination.

Program Information

- Instruction Mode: In Person
- Location: Ithaca, NY
- Minimum Credits for Degree: 120

Prerequisites

- Complete three Music courses that amount to a total of at least 5 credits with a B-minus average across the three courses
- Contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies (<https://music.cornell.edu/ariana-kim/>) to register your intention to become a Music major
- Identify and meet with a faculty Music major advisor
- Fill out the application form (<https://music.cornell.edu/music-major-application/>)
- MUSIC 1100 may be counted as one of the three qualifying courses to submit an application to the major, but cannot be counted thereafter as credits in any other category.

Program Requirements

Majors are expected to meet the following curriculum requirements with a grade of C- or better. If a course is offered S/U, a grade of S is acceptable. The minimum number of credits needed for the music major is 32.

- MUSIC 1101 Elements of Music (MT): explores a wide range of music to reveal the surprising complexity within seemingly universal musical elements: pitch, melody, harmony, rhythm, and form.
- MUSIC 2201 Introduction to Music Studies (HC): introduces students to the critical study of music as an expression of history and culture, and explores different styles of writing about music, including journalistic, academic, and creative.

Performance Requirements for all Music Majors

- Two semesters of performance courses or experiences (one must involve collaborative music making; the other may be private lessons, or other approved music-related performance experiences such as dance, DJing, or participation in a student ensemble approved for this purpose by your major advisor and a member of the performance faculty).

Elective Requirements

In consultation with their faculty advisor, students will create a program from the Department's elective courses that is tailored to their interests and development. Students will be strongly encouraged to explore at least two musical traditions through their coursework.

- A minimum of seven courses must be chosen in consultation with your music major faculty advisor
- Three electives must be at the 2000 level or higher
- Two electives must be at the 3000 level or higher (one must be HC, the other must be HC or MT)
- Two can be at any level (MUSIC 1100 may be counted as one of the three qualifying courses to submit an application to the major, but cannot be counted thereafter as credits in any other category)
- At least two electives must be a Materials and Techniques (MT), one must be at the 2000 level or higher
- At least one elective must be History and Culture (HC) course
- One (1) performance course in each category (collaborative or individual), taken for a grade, may be counted as an elective toward the graduation requirements. The same course may not be counted twice (i.e., a student may apply one course in voice lessons and one course in Glee Club, but not more than once each)

All courses must be completed with a grade of C- or better. If a course is offered S/U, a grade of S is acceptable.

Visit this page to view music course listings (<https://music.cornell.edu/courses/>).

University Graduation Requirements Requirements for All Students

In order to receive a Cornell degree, a student must satisfy academic and non-academic requirements.

Academic Requirements

A student's college determines degree requirements such as residency, number of credits, distribution of credits, and grade averages. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the specific major, degree, distribution, college, and graduation requirements for completing their chosen program of study. See the individual requirements listed by each college or school or contact the college registrar's office (<https://registrar.cornell.edu/service-resources/college-registrar-directory/>) for more information.

Non-academic Requirements

Conduct Matters. Students must satisfy any outstanding sanctions, penalties or remedies imposed or agreed to under the Student Code of Conduct (Code) or Policy 6.4. Where a formal complaint under the Code or Policy 6.4 is pending, the University will withhold awarding a degree otherwise earned until the adjudication process set forth in those procedures is complete, including the satisfaction of any sanctions, penalties or remedies imposed.

Financial Obligations. Outstanding financial obligations will not impact the awarding of a degree otherwise earned or a student's ability to access their official transcript. However, the University may withhold issuing a diploma until any outstanding financial obligations owing to the University are satisfied.

Additional Requirements for Undergraduate Students

The University has two requirements for graduation that must be fulfilled by all undergraduate students: the swim requirement, and completion of two physical education courses. For additional information about fulfilling University Graduation Requirements, see the Physical Education website (<https://scl.cornell.edu/pe/>).

Physical Education

All incoming undergraduate students are required to take two credits (two courses) of Physical Education prior to graduation. It is recommended they complete the two courses during their first year at Cornell. Credit in Physical Education may be earned by participating in courses offered by the Department of Athletics and Physical Education (https://courses.cornell.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=60&poid=30232) and Cornell Outdoor Education, by being a registered participant on a varsity athletic team, or performing in the marching band.

Students with medical concerns should contact the Office of Student Disability Services (<http://sds.cornell.edu/>).

Swim Requirement

The Faculty Advisory Committee on Athletics and Physical Education has established a basic swimming and water safety competency requirement for all undergraduate students. Normally, the requirement is taken during the Fall Orientation process at Helen Newman Hall or Teagle Hall pools. The requirement consists of the following: jump or step feet-first into the deep end of the pool, float or tread for one minute, turn around in a full circle, swim 25 yards using any stroke(s) of choice without touching the bottom or holding on to the sides (there is no time limit) and exit from the water. Students who do not complete the swim requirement during their first year, during a PE swim class or during orientation subsequent years, will have to pay a \$100 fee. Any student who cannot meet this requirement must register for PE 1100 Beginning Swimming as their physical education course before electives can be chosen.

If a student does not pass the swim requirement in their first Beginning Swimming PE class, then the student must take a second Beginning Swimming PE class (PE 1100 or PE 1101). Successful completion of two Beginning Swimming classes (based on attendance requirements) with the instructor's recommendation will fulfill the University's swim requirement.

Students unable to meet the swim requirement because of medical reasons should contact the Office of Student Disability Services (<http://sds.cornell.edu/>). When a waiver is granted by the Faculty Committee on

Physical Education, an alternate requirement is imposed. The alternate requirement substitute is set by the Director of Physical Education.

College of Arts and Sciences Graduation Requirements

Undergraduate Degrees

Graduation Requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Degree

Credit Requirement: 120 academic credits are required, 100 of which must be taken in the College of Arts & Sciences. 100 credits in Arts & Sciences is a minimum number, as is the 120 credit total. A minimum of 80 credits must be in courses for which a letter grade was received. AP, IB, CASE and A-Level credits count toward the 120 total credits but not toward the 100 A&S credits. Transfer credits for non-transfer students cannot count towards the 100 A&S credits. (See list of courses (<https://as.cornell.edu/registrar/courses-that-dont-count/>) that do not count as academic credit.)

Residency Requirement: eight full-time semesters in residence (in person) are expected to complete degree requirements with a minimum of six full-time semesters being required. External transfer students must complete a minimum of four full-time residence semesters.

First-year Writing Seminar (FWS) Requirement: two courses are required. A 5 on either the AP English Composition or Literature exam, or a 7 on the IB HL English Literature or Language exam will count towards one of these seminars. First-year students should take an FWS during their first semester at Cornell and are required to complete two by the end of their sophomore year.

Foreign Language Requirement: a student must either pass an intermediate Cornell language course at the 2000-level or above (Option 1) or complete at least 11 credits in a single foreign language at Cornell (Option 2). AP and IB credits cannot complete this requirement, but usually indicate that a student can place into a higher level course. Note: Native speakers of a foreign language may be exempted from this requirement. For a list of language offerings and placement, see Language Study at Cornell.

Distribution Requirement: Must take a minimum of 8 courses of at least 3 credits to fulfill 10 distribution categories. How an individual course is categorized is indicated with the appropriate abbreviation in its course description. It is important to recognize that only courses with the proper designation in the catalog can be used toward fulfilling the distribution requirements in Arts and Sciences. Unless otherwise specified, variable credit courses, including independent study courses, may not be used for distribution credit.

Arts & Sciences Distribution Requirement Categories:

- Arts, Literature, and Culture (ALC-AS)
- Biological Sciences (BIO-AS)
- Ethics and the Mind (ETM-AS)
- Global Citizenship (GLC-AS)
- Historical Analysis (HST-AS)
- Physical Sciences (PHS-AS)
- Social Difference (SCD-AS)
- Social Sciences (SSC-AS)
- Statistics and Data Science (SDS-AS)
- Symbolic and Mathematical Reasoning (SMR-AS)

Distribution Requirement Definitions Arts, Literature, and Culture (ALC-AS)

Courses in this area examine arts, literature, and culture in various contexts. Students gain insights into the interplay of individual or collaborative creativity and social practice, and understand the complexities of the expression of the human condition. Topics include the analysis of artworks and literary texts, and the belief systems of social groups, cultures, and civilizations; they also focus on artistic expression itself (in creative writing, performing arts, and media such as film and video).

Biological Sciences (BIO-AS)

Courses in this area focus on understanding a wide range of life forms, from single cells to plants, animals, and their ecosystems. Topics include the molecular and biochemical makeup of life, the sub-cellular, cellular and organismal structures of life, and the evolutionary relatedness of all life forms. Students learn to describe how organisms are connected to each other and to their physical environment. Many courses address how genetic information is expressed from DNA, and how this expression leads to complex function and behavior.

Ethics and the Mind (ETM-AS)

Courses in this area investigate the human mind and its capacities, ranging from cognitive faculties shared by humans and animals such as perception, to language and abstract reasoning, to the ability to form and justify ethical values. Courses investigating the mind may use the methodologies of psychology, linguistics, or philosophy. Those focusing on ethics explore ways of reflecting on questions that concern the nature of justice, the good life, or human values in general. Many courses combine these topics and methodologies.

Global Citizenship (GLC-AS)

Courses in this area examine the history, culture, politics, religion, and social relations of peoples in different parts of the world, as well as their interactions. They encourage students to think broadly about the global community and their place within it, beyond the boundaries of their particular national or cultural group, and cultivate skills of intercultural engagement that are vital to their role as global citizens. These courses introduce students to global challenges such as war and peace, social and economic inequalities, international migration, and environmental sustainability, and encourage students to think critically about international responses to these challenges.

Historical Analysis (HST-AS)

Courses in this area train students in the analysis of documentary, material, and oral evidence about social phenomena, institutions, events and ideas of the past. Students learn to evaluate and critically assess differing analyses and interpretations of former times so that they may acquire a better understanding of the origins and evolution of the present. Questions addressed in HA courses include why and under what circumstances changes have occurred in how people have interacted with one another and with the environments in which they live.

Physical Sciences (PHS-AS)

Courses satisfying this requirement provide an appreciation of how science generates and categorizes enduring knowledge of our physical world. This includes the physics, chemistry, and technology involved, of everything from light to atoms, DNA molecules, Earth science, our Solar system, and to the Cosmos. These courses expose students to both the process and some of the substance of science. By learning the universal aspects of scientific enquiry, students will be better equipped to form opinions on scientific issues that affect the world.

Social Difference (SCD-AS)

Courses in this area examine social differences relevant to the human experience. Social categories include class, race, ethnicity, indigeneity, nationality, language, religion, gender, sexuality, and ability as objects of study. Students develop a deeper understanding of these categories and their intersections. Topics may include: how hierarchies in power and status shape social differences; how social, economic and political systems can impact the interpretation of social differences; and how differences attributed to various groups are explained.

Social Sciences (SSC-AS)

Courses in this area examine social, economic, political, psychological, demographic, linguistic, and relational processes. Topics include understanding how different social contexts, for example neighborhoods, families, markets, networks, or political organizations, shape social life. Students learn to identify, describe, and explain the causes and consequences of social phenomena using quantitative and/or qualitative evidence based on systematic observation of the social world. They also learn to link evidence to theory through rigorous and transparent reasoning, and/or reflect critically on the concepts through which people make sense of the social world.

Statistics and Data Science (SDS-AS)

Courses in this area develop data literacy, essential to be an informed citizen in today's world. Students learn and apply statistical and computational techniques to effectively collect, visualize, analyze and interpret data, and present conclusions. Applications span a wide variety of contexts: providing a better understanding of the communities in which we live, guiding and enriching our lives, and driving forward scientific inquiry. Students gain an appreciation of how to ask the right questions, and how statistics can depend on the context, assumptions, and limitations of data.

Symbolic and Mathematical Reasoning (SMR-AS)

Courses satisfying this requirement help students develop the skills to solve problems through understanding abstract, logical relationships. Such skills include mathematical analysis of patterns and phenomena, modeling natural and technological systems, and creating algorithms essential to computation. These courses explore specific quantitative and symbolic methods, strategies for applying logical reasoning in diverse areas, and the intrinsic elegance of mathematics.

Major Requirement: students must complete the requirements for at least one major in A&S. See individual major listings for major requirements.

Physical Education Requirement: completion of the university requirement of two PE courses and passing the swim test. Note: physical education credit is not academic credit and does not count toward the 120 credits needed to graduate.

Policies on Applying Cornell and Non-Cornell Courses and Credits to Distribution Requirements

Restrictions on Applying AP/Test Credit and Courses from Other Institutions to the Distribution Requirements

- Students may not apply AP/test credit or transfer credit from another institution to the distribution requirements.
- Students who transfer to the college from another institution are under the above rules for advanced placement credit, but are eligible to have credit for post-high school course work taken during regular full-time semesters (not summer terms) at their previous institution count toward all distribution requirements. Transfer students receive a detailed credit evaluation when they are accepted for admission.

Restrictions on Applying Cornell Courses to the Distribution Requirements

- First-year writing seminars and ENGL 2880 Expository Writing or ENGL 2890 taken to satisfy a first-year writing seminar requirement may not count toward any other college or major requirement.
- Only courses with the proper designation in the Courses of Study can be used toward fulfilling the distribution requirements in Arts and Sciences.
- Students may not petition to change the category of any given course, nor may any faculty member change the category of a course for an individual student. Faculty members wishing to change the category for a course in which they are the primary instructor must petition the Educational Policy Committee for a change in category. If granted, the new category must be applied to the course as a whole and not for an individual student.

Courses That May Fulfill More Than One Requirement

- A course may fulfill more than one college requirement in any of the following situations:
- A course may be used to fulfill distribution and a major requirement (except if prohibited by one of the restrictions noted on applying AP/test credit, transfer credit, and Cornell courses to distribution requirements).
- A course may satisfy a maximum of two distribution categories. Students can only double-count distribution requirements on a maximum of two courses.
- A one-semester course in foreign literature (not language) or culture that is acceptable for certifying option 1 in that language may also be applied to the relevant distribution requirement.
- Courses may count toward any other requirement except first-year writing seminars.

Credit Requirement

Credits and Courses: Students must earn a minimum of 120 academic credits (which may include AP/test credits). Of the 120, a minimum of 100 must be from courses taken in the College of Arts and Sciences at Cornell.

Courses that do not count toward the 120 credits required for the degree. The College of Arts and Sciences does not grant credit toward the degree for every course offered by the university. Courses in military training, service as a teaching assistant, physical education, remedial or developmental training, precalculus mathematics, supplemental science and mathematics, offered by the Learning Strategies Center, and English as a second language are among those for which degree credit is not awarded. Students can view the list of courses that do not count for academic credit here (<https://as.cornell.edu/registrar/courses-that-dont-count/>).

Other cases in which a course may not receive credit include the following:

- A course identified as a prerequisite for a subsequent course may not be taken for credit once a student completes that subsequent course.
- A repeated course. (For more information, see "Repeating courses," below.)
- A "forbidden overlap," that is, a course with material that significantly overlaps with material in a course a student has already taken.

Students should consult the list of Forbidden Overlaps for more information.

Courses that count toward the 100 required Arts and Sciences

credits may include liberal arts courses approved for study abroad during a semester or academic year of full-time study (not summer abroad study), courses taken in certain off-campus Cornell residential programs, and a maximum of three courses that majors may accept from other colleges at Cornell as fulfilling major requirements. A&S courses taken in Cornell's summer session may count towards the 100 A&S credits.

Courses that do not count toward the 100 required Arts and Sciences

credits include credits earned in other colleges at Cornell (except in the cases specifically noted in this section), transfer credits earned in any subject at institutions other than Cornell, and advanced placement/test credits. AP/test credits count as part of the 120 credits required for the degree but not as part of the 100 Arts and Sciences credits and may not be applied to distribution requirements. AP credits are posted on the transcript. If, subsequently, a student takes the course out of which they had placed, the AP credit will be removed because of the overlap in content.

Repeating Courses

Students occasionally need to repeat courses. Some courses, such as independent study, some music and performance courses, and specific topical seminars, in which content is significantly different, do grant credit when the course is taken more than once. For all repeated courses, both grades appear on the transcript and are included in both the term and cumulative GPA. For repeated courses that do not grant credit more than once, only one instance counts toward degree credits and requirements.

Residency Requirement

The College of Arts & Sciences is a residential community and students typically spend eight semesters of full-time study in residence to earn the B.A. degree.

The completion of a fall or spring term as a full-time registered student at Cornell counts as a semester in residence. Summer and winter terms at Cornell, study in Cornell's School of Continuing Education and at other institutions do not count as semesters of residence.

The residency requirement has two components: a minimum number of semesters in residence and a requirement to spend the last full-time semester of study in residence.

Students matriculating into the College of Arts & Sciences as first-year students must have a minimum of six semesters in residence before graduating. First-year matriculants into A&S can count up to two semesters in an approved off-campus program as semesters in residence. Approved off-campus programs include A&S approved study abroad programs, Cornell in Washington, Cornell in Rome, and the Cornell-China & Asia-Pacific Studies (CAPS) Program.

Students who transfer into the College of Arts & Sciences after matriculating in their first-year in another Cornell college (internal transfers) must have a minimum of six semesters in residence, and a minimum of two semesters in the College of Arts and Sciences before graduating. Internal transfers can count up to two semesters in an approved off-campus program as semesters in residence.

Students who transfer into Cornell from another institution (external transfers) must have a minimum of four semesters in residence, and a minimum of two semesters in the College of Arts & Sciences, before

graduating. External transfers can count up to one semester in an approved off-campus program as a semester in residence.

In addition to the minimum number of semesters in residence, all students must complete their final full-time semester of study (i.e., the last semester in which at least 9 academic credits are needed to meet graduation requirements) in residence. Students who have fewer than 9 credits to complete degree requirements, and have met the minimum number of semesters residency requirement, may elect to complete their degree requirements during Cornell summer and winter terms registered as an A&S student or at another institution with approved transfer credit. Students cannot meet final degree requirements registered as an extramural student at Cornell.

Exceptions to the residency requirement are not petitionable.

Foreign Language Requirement

The faculty considers competence in a foreign language essential for an educated person. Studying a language other than one's own helps students understand the dynamics of language, our fundamental intellectual tool, and enables students to understand another culture. The sooner a student acquires this competence, the sooner it will be useful. Hence, work toward the foreign language requirement should be undertaken in the first two years. Students postponing the language requirement for junior and senior years risk not graduating on time. Courses in foreign languages and/or literature are taught in the College of Arts and Sciences by the following departments: Africana Studies and Research Center, Asian Studies, Classics, Comparative Literature, German Studies, Linguistics, Near Eastern Studies, and Romance Studies. For a list of languages and placement see Language Study at Cornell.

The language requirement may be satisfied in one of the following ways:

Option 1 (FLOPI): Passing (a) a non-introductory foreign language course of 3 or more credits at Cornell at the 2000-level or above or (b) any other non-introductory course at the 2000-level or above conducted in a foreign language at Cornell. OR

Option 2: Passing at least 11 credits of study in a single foreign language (taken in the appropriate sequence) at Cornell.

Any exceptions to these rules will be noted elsewhere in individual department descriptions.

Students whose speaking, reading, and writing competence in a language other than English is at the same level we would expect our entering first-year students to have in English (as shown by completing high school in that language or by special examination during their first year here at Cornell) are exempt from the college's language requirement.

Major Requirement

Most departments and programs specify certain prerequisites for admission to the major; they are found on the pages for each department and program available at Degree Programs.

Students may apply for acceptance into the major as soon as they have completed the prerequisites and are confident of their choice. This may be as early as the second semester of their first year, and must be no later than the end of the second semester of sophomore year. A student without a major at the beginning of the junior year is not making satisfactory progress toward the degree and risks not being allowed to continue in the college. Undeclared first-term juniors must file a Late Declaration of Major form with Student Services and may be placed on

a leave of absence during their junior year if they have not yet declared a major.

Double Majors

Completion of one major is required for graduation. Some students choose to complete more than one major. No special permission or procedure is required; students simply become accepted into multiple majors and are assigned to an advisor in each department. All completed majors are posted on the official transcript. Students are not allowed to continue their studies past their eighth semester to complete additional majors.

Early and Delayed Graduation

Graduating Early

A student may elect to graduate early if they are able to complete all graduation requirements in fewer than eight semesters.

Students must still satisfy the college's residency requirement as part of the graduation requirements. This residency requirement requires that students who are first-year matriculants into Cornell spend a minimum of six semesters in residence, external transfers must spend a minimum of four. To request an early graduation, students must notify the A&S Registrar's Office in KG 17 Klarman Hall or at as-studentservices@cornell.edu (as-studentservices@cornell.edu?subject=Early%20Graduation%20Request).

The earliest a student can request to graduate early and officially change their graduation date is immediately following the pre-enrollment period for their anticipated final semester. The student should have pre-enrolled in the classes required to meet the graduation requirements by the requested graduation date. The student must then complete Part I in DUST and have Part II completed by their major advisor.

Graduating Late: Ninth Term Enrollment

The Bachelor of Arts degree is expected to be completed in eight terms. If degree requirements cannot be completed in eight terms, students may seek permission to continue their studies. Requests will only be granted for students who have found themselves in emergent circumstances beyond their control which have prevented them from completing the degree in eight terms. Requests cannot be made until a student's final expected graduation term and will not be reviewed and approved until after the university drop deadline for that semester. Study beyond the eighth term is not automatically granted for the purposes of changing a major. Such requests must be discussed with a college academic advisor and require registrar approval. Requests to add an additional major or minor will not be approved for study beyond the eighth term.

If approved, students in the ninth and tenth term will be on a conditional status and will have restrictions placed on their enrollment to ensure successful completion of their degree. To request a ninth term, students must have their faculty advisor update Part II for any remaining major requirements. They will also need to submit a study plan to their college advisor listing the specific courses that will meet degree requirements for one major.

Student may elect to prorate credits if enrolling in 9 or fewer credits or take a full-time load if they desire. However, enrollment will be limited to 18 credits for the term so students can focus on their remaining required courses. In the rare case where a student may need to enroll in a tenth term to complete their degree, they will be required to prorate tuition and their enrollment will be limited to only the courses/credits needed for successful completion of one major. Additional enrollments will not be allowed.

Graduation Procedures

Application to Graduate

In the first semester of their senior year, students are prompted by Arts & Sciences Student Services to complete an online application to graduate. The application is intended to help seniors identify problems early enough in the final year to make any necessary changes in course selection to satisfy those requirements. Nonetheless, ensuring graduation requirements are fully met is the student's responsibility and any problems that are discovered, even late in the final semester, must be resolved by the student before the degree can be granted. Students are responsible for checking their DUST (https://data.arts.cornell.edu/as-stus/degree_reqts.cfm) reports and transcripts each term and alerting Student Services of any problems with their academic record. To check on their progress in the major, students should consult with their major advisors.

Degree Dates

Cornell has three official degree conferral dates in the year: December, May, and August. Students who plan to graduate in August may attend commencement ceremonies in the preceding or subsequent May. Students graduating in December are invited to a special recognition ceremony in December and may also attend Commencement the following May. All academic work must be complete by the official conferral date in order to receive a degree on that date. Incomplete academic work will result in a later conferral date.

Honors

Notice: beginning with the December 2026 conferral date, Cornell University will institute a standardized Latin Honors system based solely on final cumulative undergraduate GPA. The Latin Honors categories include: Summa Cum Laude (top 5%), Magna Cum Laude (next 10%), and Cum Laude (next 15%).

The student's cumulative undergraduate GPA percentile at the time of degree conferral will be computed with respect to the student's particular college. Existing college-specific Latin Honors systems not based upon the new standardized criteria will be discontinued at the end of Summer 2026. This will apply to all major honors in Arts & Sciences as they will no longer use Latin Honors and will award "Honors in X" (e.g. Honors in Chemistry, Honors in English, etc.) Please see Graduation and Academic Honors for more information.

Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Almost all departments offer honors programs for students who have demonstrated exceptional accomplishment in the major and succeeded in research. The conferring of honors, and the requirements for conferral (cum laude, magna cum laude, or summa cum laude) are set by the departments for each major, the Independent Major Program, or the College Scholar Program. Minors do not offer honors programs. Students should contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies (<https://as.cornell.edu/about/directors-undergraduate-study/>) with questions about honors in the respective program.

Bachelor of Arts with Distinction

The degree of Bachelor of Arts with distinction in all subjects will be conferred on students who have completed the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, if they have met the following requirements by the end of their final semester:

1. completed at least 60 credits while registered in regular sessions at Cornell;

2. achieved a GPA in the upper 30 percent of their class at the end of the seventh semester, or next-to-last semester for transfers and accelerants;
3. received a grade below C– in no more than one course;
4. received no failing grade (excluding PE);
5. have no frozen Incompletes on their records; and
6. maintained good academic standing, including completing a full schedule of at least 12 academic credits, in each of their last four semesters. (Students who have been approved to have prorated tuition for their final semester are considered to be in good academic standing).