

What is a Special Major?

The Bachelor of Arts: Special Major is an option at San Francisco State University for students who have well defined academic goals appropriate for a Bachelor's degree that cannot be satisfactorily attained through one of the existing undergraduate major programs offered by San Francisco State University or with a major and minor combination.

A Special Major consists of a well-designed combination of courses selected from a minimum of three different academic departments belonging to at least two colleges at SF State. The interdisciplinary Special Major program must be planned in advance to focus on an integrative and coherent theme identified by the student. The student must prepare a written statement that thoroughly describes the major, identifying the academic theme of the major, and providing justification as to why the selected departments and courses for the major are necessary to complete the identified field of study.

A Special Major may not duplicate an existing major program (by name or content) offered at San Francisco State University, nor may it be used as a means of bypassing prescribed major requirements. A Special Major must be planned and pre-approved rather than created as an afterthought to utilize previously completed courses. Students must have a minimum of 30 units to complete in the major, including work in progress, at the time the special major is fully approved. For a Special Major to be considered for approval, the academic program must be supported by faculty (usually department chairs) of the departments selected to be included in the Special Major. The program cannot utilize independent study or transfer credits to meet the basic, minimum unit requirements for the program.

Requirements for Special Major Candidates

In order to apply for a Special Major, an undergraduate student must be admitted and attending San Francisco State University. The appropriate time for a student to pursue a Special Major is when they have completed a minimum of 45 and no more than 90 semester units of university course work with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0. It is not guaranteed that a Special Major will be approved just because a student meets the qualifications and is interested. Some interested students may have unique academic goals, but their academic plan may not meet the guidelines for a Special Major approval. Additionally, some academic departments may not approve their courses to be included in a Special Major. It should also be noted that approval of a Special Major does not guarantee access to all courses included in a Special Major. Some departments restrict priority registration of their courses to students declared into the department major.

Guidelines for Special Major Requirements

- A Special Major consists of a planned combination of courses chosen to focus on an academic theme identified by the student. The courses proposed for the Special Major must be carefully selected for their support of and specific applicability to the unique objectives described in the thematic statement.
- The major must be planned in advance and then receive approval by the Special Major Advisor, Department Chairs (or designee) and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies.
- A Special Major requires a minimum of 45 approved units of which at least 36 units must be upper division.
- Course work to support the identified theme must meet the following criteria:
 - Courses must be selected from at least three different departments within two or more colleges at SF State. If a student's academic plan can be accomplished with course work from two departments, a double major or major and minor combination should be considered.
 - A minimum of 9 units and no more than 21 units must be completed in each department.
 - As long as requirements are met for three departments from two colleges with units ranging from 9 to 21 units, the student can supplement their Special Major with relevant elective courses. If courses selected from a single department total fewer than 9 units, the courses are considered electives.
- At least 30 units of work in the Special Major Program must be completed after final approval has been obtained. Courses enrolled in during the semester in which the special major is approved are counted as part of the 30 units.

Advising for a Special Major

Students will work with the Assistant Director, Herman Lee, from the Undergraduate Advising Center (UAC) as their Special Major Advisor. The student will consult with him on developing the special major, course plans, maintaining academic success, and the application for graduation process. The student may also work with department faculty for advising on in-depth subjects related to the Special Major.

The process to declare a Special Major

1. Learn about Special Majors and Programs at SFSU.

- The first step for a student interested in creating a Special Major is to review the Special Major Guidelines and information found on the Undergraduate Advising Center (UAC) webpage. Students will also need to review existing [programs and majors](#) listed in the SFSU Bulletin.

2. Draft out the Special Major idea and courses.

- It is recommended that the student create a course list for the proposed Special Major and start a first draft of their idea for the Special Major theme to bring to their meeting with Herman Lee.

3. Meet with an Assistant Director Herman Lee from the UAC to confirm that the student's interests align with Special Major guidelines.

- Students can [schedule an appointment](#) online to meet with Herman Lee to discuss the Special Major. They can reach out to him directly at hklee@sfsu.edu if they run into any difficulties.
- Herman and the student will discuss the proposed Special Major and Herman will help guide the student on next steps in developing the course list and statement.
- **Note:** if the interested student feels stuck or has questions on how to proceed, it is appropriate for them to meet with Herman at any point in the process.

4. Meet with Department Chairs to review proposed course list.

- Students should schedule appointments with the department chairs to discuss and solicit feedback on the Special Major proposal. The department chairs must support the proposed special major.
- Review proposed course list.
 - i. Discuss relevance of proposed courses and any other recommendations.
 - ii. Discuss course content and any difficulties student might have with the courses.
 - iii. Discuss any enrollment challenges for students not declared in the major of the department teaching the proposed courses.

5. Complete the Special Major Statement.

- Through the process of working with the Special Major Advisor, the student will develop and refine the Special Major statement and the course list. The writing of the statement is a process that usually requires at least a couple of rewrites before the statement is ready for approval.
- The student may also receive help writing the statement with a tutor at the [Tutoring and Academic Support Center \(TASC\)](#).

6. Obtain major department approval signatures on the Application for the Special Major and submit the completed special major application to the Special Major Advisor.

- When Herman and the student feel that the statement is well developed and the course list is appropriate, the student proceeds to each department for approval from the department chair.



- Herman will sign off on the application after the major department chairs have signed off on the proposal.
- Herman Lee will arrange for the final approval of the Special Major from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education.

7. Wait for the Special Major Advisor to finalize the Special Major.

- After your Special Major is approved, the Special Major Advisor will work with the University Curriculum Coordinator to official create the major and with the Registrar's Office to assist the student in declaration of the Special Major.
- The Special Major advisor will notify you of the approval including a copy of the full application and signed forms which we recommend keeping for reference during your undergraduate studies and beyond.