



BA in CIS and the Related Field

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Many students ask, “what is this related field in the BA, and how do I decide on the related field?” Let’s start by looking at the goal of the BA program:

“The program permits students to combine the study of computer science with the study of some related field of potential computer application.” (BA CIS webpage, <http://www.cse.ohio-state.edu/ugrad/bacis.shtml>).

This means that students have flexibility in deciding on a course of study. But with that flexibility comes responsibility: the department does not dictate particular choices of courses; rather, the choice of courses is directed by the student’s interest and are approved by the *faculty advisor*. For the BA CIS program, these elective choices cover the technical electives, related field, and the general electives.

It should be noted that the BA CIS program is not intended to be an “escape hatch” program for substituting non-CSE courses in the major. Rather, the student’s *responsibility* is to put together a coherent set of courses, in consultation with the faculty advisor, that define a reasonable trajectory of advanced courses demonstrating the application of computer science in a related area.

Related Field Core includes:

- Intellectually coherent selection of courses with a clear relationship of the related field to computing
- At least 6 cr-hrs at the 2000-level or above
- CSE Advising Office can suggest related fields, including minor programs, based on interest

Program Electives include:

- At least 6 cr-hrs of additional courses in Related Field at the 2000-level or above



BA in CIS and the Related Field: FAQ

What does “technical in nature” mean? At least one course should have a computing-related topic as a major element involved in the course material. Examples might include Computer Music, Digital Photography, Computational Linguistics, Computational Models of Psychology, etc.

Do all of the classes need to come from one department? No. Having all of the classes come from one department is one way to ensure that you have a coherent program. But students have been able to use different courses from different programs (e.g. Art and Design) as long as the form a coherent set of courses. Incorporating random courses from different departments won't work.

Can I use a 1xx course as an intro course under quarters? No. The College of Arts and Sciences requires that courses used in the major be 200 level or higher.

Can I use a 1xxx course under semesters? Yes, up to 6 units can be 1xxx since they count as pre-major (not major) requirements for the purposes of BA-CIS. Major requirements for Arts & Sciences still require 2000-level or higher.

I have no idea what to do for a related field. Do you have suggestions? First, you should seriously consider whether the BA-CIS is right for you: the major is intended for you to study a computationally related field that you are interested in, and that decision needs to come from you. The CSE advising office does have sample tracks for the BA-CIS if you want ideas. If you come to the faculty advisor with that question, the first response will probably be “what are YOU interested in?” So spend a little time thinking about what interests you have before meeting with your faculty advisor and come in with some ideas: it will save both of you quite a bit of time, and you can make your meeting more productive by working together to shape a program based on your interests.

I've taken [courses] and want to make them into my related field. How can I make this work? The faculty advisor will evaluate whether the courses you have taken satisfy the rules of the degree. Don't be surprised if (s)he suggests that you need to take one or two more courses. This is why it's best to plan courses early *before* you've taken the courses.

The key to a successful BA program is to decide what interests YOU, look through the course catalogue for courses that might be interesting, and come up with your own ideas. Having a good starting point makes the advising process go much more smoothly! The faculty advisor may have suggested changes if your plan doesn't meet with the spirit and rules of the BA, so plan to work with him or her to make this YOUR excellent program.