

Double Major or Double Degrees?

Double the Fun but not the Trouble

Alex C. is an ambitious sophomore at JMU. As a freshman, she was unable to make up her mind as to what her major should be. She was interested in languages but wanted something more “practical” to fall back on. When she arrived to campus, she brought in 10 credits through dual enrollment. Because she is a Marching Royal Duke (MRD), she is taking two extra credits every fall semester. Having completed a semester abroad this past summer, she has already accumulated more than 55 credits and will be considered a junior by the end of fall semester, even though this is her third semester at JMU. A talk with her advisor led her to the conclusion that a double degree would make more sense than double majoring alone.

“I have a feeling it will be easier to find a job with the double degree,” she says. “As I have to take so many courses to fit my interests together, the double degree is a simple solution to the number of credits I take every semester.”

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A double degree requires students to complete a minimum of 150 credits, plus two sets of degree requirements, whether it is a combination of BBA, B.S., B.A., B.M., etc. In Alex’s case, she will be getting a bachelor of science in communication studies and a bachelor of arts in Italian.

Aside from the general education courses (which are not taken twice), the candidate for the double degree fulfills the requirements of the prospective majors (there will be a minimum of two majors), the degree requirements for each (two math including stats and a science for the bachelor of science, and a language at the 232 level plus a philosophy course for the B.A.). Alex also plans on completing a minor in Asian studies (having already taken 17 credits of Japanese and eyeing the possibility of studying abroad in Korea summer 2016).

“The Korean program fulfills electives for my major in communication studies and will count towards the needed hours for the minor in Asian studies,” she explains. “I plan on taking a Buddhist philosophy course, which will count for my minor and for the B.A. degree requirements as well.”

Students who plan to complete a double degree should be warned that they will have to take more than five courses per semester if they wish to complete the requirements in four years. For Alex, that’s not a problem. “I’m here to learn, so I might as well take advantage of the tuition pay cut off.” (There is no extra charge for more than 12 hours per semester.)

“I encouraged her to go for it,” said her freshman/communication studies advisor, Annick Dupal. “Alex is bright and motivated, and she has a plan. Graduate school is definitely part of that plan. If all goes well she wants to get her master’s in Italy with a European Union Policy Studies concentration intersecting with her interests with Asia.”

The major difference between the double major and the double degree is the number of credits (the former requires 120, the latter 150) and the degree requirements that must be met.

For more information on the double degree, please consult https://www.jmu.edu/registrar/students/change_major.shtml