

Adding Minors to an Academic Plan: Guidance for Advisors

Minors are a way for students to explore an area of interest beyond their major in a focused way. They can also be useful to indicate an area of knowledge to a future employer or graduate program.

At Southern, minors are 18 credits. Minors are [not eligible for federal financial aid](#) unless they are required by a student's major OR fall within a student's free elective space.

The following information is provided to help you support students in deciding whether or not adding a minor is a good academic choice. It will also explain how to determine whether a student has room in their free electives to accommodate a minor (meaning the courses would be eligible for federal financial aid).

General Reminders

- Students are allowed to add minors even if they do not have the free elective space available to accommodate the minor. However, they must be informed that:
 - Not all courses for the minor will be eligible for federal financial aid.
 - Completing the minor will mean extending the credits needed (and possibly time) to graduate.
 - Students may drop a minor at any point in time.
- Tuition is the same rate for 12-18 credits. Thus, a student can add a course not eligible for federal financial aid as a 5th or 6th course and have it covered (not have to pay out of pocket).
- Aid coverage is not split for a course. For example, if a student has 4 credits of free elective space left, the following would be covered:
 - One 4-credit course
 - Two 3-credit courses
 - One 3-credit course and one 1-credit course
 - One 3-credit course and one 2 credit course
- Students registered for a course that is not covered by federal financial aid AND whose aid is impacted by this registration, will continue to receive a CPOS notice before the semester starts. This provides them time to and guidance on changing

their registration before the term starts. Students will only receive a CPOS notice if their aid is impacted.

- For students with tight free elective space, **careful planning is key to making a minor work**. If a student wishes to add a minor, their academic plan should immediately be updated to show them where and when to take courses towards their minor.
- Courses towards a minor can share with other areas of a student's program:
 - 3 credits can be shared between a minor and a major.
 - Unlimited credits can be shared between a minor and cognates.
 - Unlimited credits can be shared between a minor and LEP requirements.

A Final Important Reminder: Free elective space is dynamic and will update as the student makes registration choices and takes advantage of share policies. Therefore, the space available to cover a minor may change if students make different choices than originally planned. It is important to check in with progress towards a minor at every advising session.

Understanding Free Elective Credits & Excess Credits

Free electives are courses students take outside of General Education, Major, Cognate, or Minor requirements to get the 120 credits required to graduate. Free electives needed will vary from student to student, even within the same major, based on a student's prior coursework and any requirements they may have had waived.

Determining Free Electives Required

The number of free electives a student needs can be found at the top of the Degree Evaluation:

Bachelor of Science Degree INCOMPLETE

Credits Required: 120 Credits Applied to Program (Excludes Excess): 79 Catalog year: Fall 2025

○ Overall Credits Required **Still needed:** 120 credits are required, including a total of 6 free elective credits.

This student currently needs to earn 6 free electives. This number is dynamic and will update if the student takes courses that share across areas of their program (free elective

total will go up) or adds a minor or accelerated pathway option (free elective total will go down). **Free electives required should be checked in every advising session, particularly as a student nears their final semesters of coursework.**

Determining Free Electives Remaining

The free elective block (found towards the bottom of the Degree Evaluation) shows how many free electives a student has earned (including current registration). If you do not see a free elective block, the student has earned 0 free electives.

Free Electives					
Credits Applied: 3					
Course	Title	Grade	Credits	Term	Repeated
MKT 338	Services Marketing	IP	(3)	Spring 2026	

This student has earned 3 free electives. To determine the number of free electives remaining, subtract the bottom number from the top number.

In this example, the student needs 6 overall free electives (number at the top) and has earned 3 (number at the bottom); therefore, they need to earn 3 additional free electives.

The Excess Block

Credits that do not slot into a general education, major, cognate, or minor requirement (as in a specific line on the degree evaluation) will fall into free electives. **If a student does not require more free electives to reach 120 credits, those credits fall into excess.** Note that students can have credits in excess even with remaining unfulfilled degree requirements (as the excess credits do not meet any remaining degree requirement).

The excess block will appear at the bottom of the degree evaluation only if there are credits in excess.

Excess Courses:Not Counted in Program

Credits Applied: 1

Course	Title
IDS 321	Career Pathways in IDS

Checking for Space *Before* Adding a Minor

Look at the degree evaluation before adding a minor to determine if free elective space is available.

If an excess block is present, credits are not available for a minor.

Exception: If the minor can be fully completed using free electives already taken, excess courses, or credits shared from the LEP, major, or cognate, or a combination of these.

If an excess block is not present, you must perform a calculation.

In the example below, when considering a Theatre minor, this student will have *5 overall credits* that are eligible for aid towards the minor (this includes any previous, in-progress, or future courses that will be applied toward the minor).

- A:** Free Electives Available (ex. 5)
- (+)** **B:** Shared Credits from LEP/Major/Cognate (ex. 3)
- (-)** **C:** Free Electives Already Earned that don't apply to the minor (ex. 3)

Bachelor of Science Degree INCOMPLETE

Credits Required: 120 Credits Applied to Program (Excludes Excess): 31 Catalog year: Fall 2025

- Overall Credits Required **Still needed:** 120 credits are required, including a total of 5 free elective credits. A
- Southern Credits Required **Still needed:** 30 credits are required, you have 12 credits and still need 18 more.
- Minimum 16 credits of 300 to 400-level CHE courses taken at SCSU **Still needed:** A minimum of 16 CHE credits at the 300 to 400-level must be taken at SCSU. You have taken 0 but need 16 more credits.
- Overall GPA of 2.0

General Education: LEP Explorations INCOMPLETE

When up to three courses in the major/cognate may also satisfy LEP Foundations and Explorations requirements, they are recommended below; only two courses within Explorations (T2) may be fulfilled by courses in the same subject.

	Course	Title	Grade	Credits	Term	Repeated
<input type="radio"/>	Natural World (Recommend BIO 103, CHE 120, 121, and PHY 230 for Major/Cognate)	Still needed:	Choose from 1 of the following:			
<input type="radio"/>	Option I	You must complete the following:				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Life and Environment	BIO 102	Biology I	4	4	Fall 2025
	Satisfied by:	BIO003 - Biology - Advanced Placement				
<input type="radio"/>	Physical Realm	1 Class in @ @ with attribute = T2PR and credits >= 3				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	American Experience -OR- Time & Place	HIS 110	United States History to 1877	A	3	Fall 2025
	Satisfied by:	HIS110 - - Connecticut State Community College				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Conflict & Consensus -OR- Mind & Body	ANT 101	Cultural Anthropology	IP	(3)	Spring 2026
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Creative Drive	THR 121	Foundations of Acting	IP	(3) B	Spring 2026

Free Electives

Credits Applied: 3

Course	Title	Grade	Credits	Term	Repeated
ART 112	Color and 2-D Design	A	3 C	Fall 2025	
Satisfied by:	ART112 - - Connecticut State Community College				

Total Aid Eligible Credits for the minor: 5 credits

Checking Space *After* a Minor is Added

Once the minor is added, you can still check to see how many credits in the minor are aid eligible. Remember, this number may change as students complete coursework and apply shares.

Whether an excess credit block is present or not, you must perform a calculation.

- From the student's current degree evaluation, run a What-If Analysis
- Verify the current program, major, and concentration are selected
- Leave the minor blank (allows review as if the minor were not yet added)
- Click Process

You will perform the same calculation from the prior section to determine how much space is available for the minor.

Student ID: 70321316
Name: Demmi, AcaPreferred
Degree: Bachelor of Science

Advanced search

Level Undergraduate Class Freshman Program Chemistry, BS Major Chemistry Concentration Biochemistry Minor Theatre Major Advisor David Allen
Pronoun(s): They/Them/Their

Degree Evaluation **What-If Analysis** View Previous What-If Analysis 02/04/2026 at 09:09 AM (BS)

What-If Analysis

Use current curriculum In-progress classes Preregistered classes

Program

Catalog year *
Fall 2025

Program *
Chemistry, BS

Level *
Undergraduate

Degree *
Bachelor of Science

Areas of study

Major *
Chemistry

Concentration
Biochemistry

Minor **Leave blank**

Minor Block

Minor blocks on the degree evaluation will display the following advice message:

Minor in Theatre INCOMPLETE

Catalog year: Fall 2025

Financial Aid Notice: Courses for an OPTIONAL minor may not be eligible for financial aid. If you are already enrolled in 12-15 other aid-eligible credits for the semester (full-time status), taking an additional minor course will not affect your aid. If you have fewer than 12 aid-eligible credits, minor courses generally cannot be counted to reach full-time status. See your advisor for assistance.

	Course	Title	Grade	Credits	Term	Repeated
○ Minimum Credits	Still needed:	18 credits are required for this minor; you have 3 credits applied. Only one course may be shared with your major/concentration.				

If the student is in a major with a required minor, they will also see advice indicating their minor is required and therefore eligible for federal financial aid.

Final Reminder

For minors where not all credits are aid-eligible, students may choose to stay in the minor and complete any remaining credits by sharing additional courses with the minor from the major, LEP, cognate, or by taking the minor courses a 5th course each semester.