School of Computing
Frequently Asked Questions

Jump to questions about:

1. 1st YEAR PLAN SELECTION
2. UPPER YEAR ENTRY INTO COMPUTING (PLAN CHANGE REQUESTS)
3. COMPUTING PLANS
4. CIPS ACCREDITATION
5. INTERNSHIPS AND CAREERS
6. ACADEMIC ADVISING
7. USEFUL CONTACTS

Also try searching this document by keyword.

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1ST YEAR PLAN SELECTION

What are the minimum requirements for automatic acceptance into a Computing plan?

To qualify to get into a Computing Honours plan in your second year, you need to have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.6, and at least a B in either CISC 121 or 124. To get on our pending list for consideration for a 4-year Honours plan, you need a 2.3 cumulative GPA and at least a B- in 121 or 124. If you don't meet the minimum for the Honours pending list, you might consider applying to the 3-year General instead. The requirements for the pending list for the General are a C in 121 or 124, and a 2.0 cumulative GPA.

Are 1st year students added automatically to any plan?

No. You must do this yourself through SOLUS during Plan Selection. Once you have completed 24.0 units (each one-term course is 3.0 units), you must select a plan.

Can I wait until 2nd year to choose my plan?

Only if you have fewer than 24.0 units. If you have fewer than 24.0 units, you are not required to select a plan and are technically considered 1st year. This means you’ll have priority enrollment status as a 1st year student, and you can work on improving your grades before next Spring’s Plan Selection period. Your goal must be to gain a strong foundation of knowledge of the material covered in CISC 121 and 124, and greatly improve your grades before next year’s Plan Selection period, when you will then be required to select a plan.

However, if you have 24.0+ units, you MUST select a plan for which you qualify. If you don’t meet the minimum requirements for Computing, you’ll need to find an alternate program in another department.

What happens if your cumulative GPA is slightly below 2.6 but your grade for CISC121 and/or 124 are B and above?

Unfortunately, you will still not qualify for automatic entry. Both requirements must be met. You would, however, qualify for the pending list as long as your GPA is over 2.3.

Where can I find the official grade scale for letter grades, GPAs, and percentages?

This information can be found on the Registrar’s website under Official GPA Grading Scale. For quick reference, a B is a 3.0 GPA or 73-76.9%.

Where can I find more information on plan selection?

Please visit the Arts and Science Plan Selection web page.
I’m enrolled in CISC 121/124 this Summer. Does this count for plan selection?

No. SOLUS will only consider the grades/credits that appear on your record as of the date/time you submit your plan selection request. Because Plan Selection runs from May 27th to June 7th, your course will not have been completed by then. Future or in-progress courses cannot be considered. If you do not qualify at the time you submit your request, you will need to select an alternate plan in another Arts and Science program for which you qualify.

Does our cumulative GPA come out before the selection period? (considering exams)

Yes. Your transcript will always show your cumulative GPA based on whatever final grades you have currently achieved. If you are still waiting for your grades from the Winter term, it will only calculate your GPA based on your Fall term grades. After exams have concluded, and once Winter final grades are posted to everyone’s transcripts (this year it’s May 12th), your GPA will change to include these new grades. If you have a deferred exam, this grade may show up as IN and not be included in your GPA. You can find more information about the release of grades on the Release Dates & Viewing your Grades page on the Registrar’s website.

What if I can’t get into any Computing plan? What happens if I don’t select a plan at all?

If you have 24.0+ units and you do not select a plan, you will not be able to enroll in your courses, so you MUST choose a plan for which you qualify. This will mean choosing a plan from another Arts and Science program.

It’s worth mentioning that being in another program/plan does not prevent you from taking 2nd year Computing courses; you can still enroll in courses (for which you meet the requirements), but you will not have enrollment priority. You will need to wait for open enrollment and room in the course may be limited. Once you have improved your grades (and retaken either 121 or 124 to get a B or better), you can reapply the next Spring for entry as an upper year student.

My GPA is a lot lower than I had hoped. Is it a good idea to try for the 3-year General plan instead? Can I upgrade to an Honours plan later?

Yes, and yes. The requirements for the 3-year General are lower, so you may stand a better chance of getting in that way. It’s still a pending list process, so again, no guarantee of acceptance. If you are accepted into the 3-year plan, you will be a Computing student which means you will get the usual priority enrolment status during course selection. You
will want to take the next year to focus on improving your grades, and you can then reapply the next Spring during Plan Change/Plan Selection to “upgrade” to an Honours plan.

**Is there a threshold for the pending list?**

Yes. The pending list threshold for most Honours plans is a B- in either CISC 121 or 124, and a 2.3 cumulative GPA. The pending list threshold for the 3-year General plans is lower: you must have a C in either CISC 121 or 124, and a 2.0 cumulative GPA. Some plans, such as Computing and Math (COMA) and Computing and Creative Arts (COCA) have additional/higher requirements. More details can be found on the Arts and Science Plan Selection website. Please note that these thresholds only qualify you to be added to the list for consideration, and there is no guarantee of acceptance.

**Do most students make it off the pending list?**

This depends entirely on a) how much space is left in the program after 1st year automatic acceptances, b) how many others are on the pending list, and c) how your qualifications compare with theirs. These facts change from one year to the next and we won’t know the numbers until everyone has submitted their requests. We accept as many students as we can, keeping in mind class size restrictions and teaching load. If we allow too many students in, we risk losing program quality.

**What if my GPA is not enough to join the pending list?**

You will need to select an alternate plan in another program for which you qualify. You can retake Computing courses as necessary to improve your grades and reapply next year during the next Plan Selection Period as an upper year student.

**I'm having a technical problem with my Plan Selection on SOLUS.**

Most information can be found at the Arts and Science Plan Selection page. Unfortunately, we can’t see the student view on SOLUS as administrators, so we can’t advise on the actual selection process. For help with that, please contact the Arts and Science plan selection hotline at 613-533-6708, or by email at passhelp@queensu.ca.
If I can’t get into any Computing plan, can I keep taking Computing courses and improve my grades and get into Computing next year? Would that make me lose a year?

You can be in a completely different program and still take any 1st and 2nd year Computing courses that you want, subject to space in the course, and as long as you meet the requirements. As a non-Computing student, though, you would need to wait until open enrollment. You can retake any courses you did poorly in if you need to improve your grade. Only the highest grade is counted towards your GPA.

No, you won’t necessarily lose any time. Even if you are in an entirely different Arts and Science program, you can still take any Computing courses for which you meet the requirements. Bear in mind, however, that if you’re taking all Computing courses and neglecting the degree requirements for the program that you’re actually in, if you still aren’t accepted, the Computing courses you’ve taken may not be usable towards your current program. Further to this, you will not be able to take 3rd or 4th year courses in Computing unless you are a Computing student. This means that after 2nd year, you won’t be able to progress towards a Computing degree because you won’t qualify to get into those upper year courses.

Will we have the gateway courses going into 3rd or 4th year?

Once you are in Computing, there are no further qualifications to remain in the program. In other words, there are no minimum grades or GPA to meet after the 1st year, other than to maintain a high enough GPA to avoid academic probation. You will still need to achieve certain grade requirements in your prerequisite courses to progress to subsequent courses, and your 4th year Capstone course will also have stringent requirements that must be met. These details can be found in the course descriptions on the Academic Calendar.

I’m an upper year student trying to get into Computing. I have now met the 1st year minimum requirements. Do I get automatic acceptance now? What can I do to guarantee that I’ll be accepted?

The only time these minimum requirements are considered - other than as a benchmark - is during your Plan Selection going from 1st year into 2nd year. This is the only time a student is guaranteed entry into a Computing plan, and only if they qualify. After this, it is a competitive process.
Your odds of being accepted into a Computing plan via the pending list depend on:

1. How many 1st year students are automatically accepted (dictating how much space is left in the program),
2. How many other students are on the pending list requesting entry, and
3. How your qualifications compare with theirs.

There is no way to for us to know these facts until after the plan selection period closes, so we truly can’t tell you what your chances are. We can, however, tell you what we’re looking for when we assess applications. Although we consider everyone’s case as holistically as possible, this is primarily what we are looking for:

1. Your cumulative GPA (this is our primary sort order).
2. Your grades in CISC 121 and/or 124 (you must have at least one)
3. If you are an upper-year student seeking entry, what other 2nd year Computing courses you’ve taken, and your grades in those.

If you are an upper year student with qualifications that exceed the minimum for 1st year automatic entry (2.6 cumulative GPA and a B in either CISC 121 or 124), you usually stand a good chance of being accepted if there is room in the program. Likewise, if you are a 1st year student who missed the minimum requirements by a small margin (e.g., you had a high GPA, but only got a B- in either 121 or 124), you also stand a fair chance of being admitted.

The bottom line is that, if you’re requesting entry into Computing via the pending list, there are no guarantees.

**Can I transfer into Computing mid-year? Do I have to wait for the Plan Selection/Plan Change Request period in the Spring?**

In response to the pressures of large class sizes and questions of fairness, we have reverted to the standard Arts and Science policy of requiring students who want to switch into Computing to wait for the normal Plan Selection/Plan Change Request period in late May. You will be able to make a request on SOLUS and it will be processed at the same time as all other requests for selecting a Computing plan.
QUESTIONS ABOUT COMPUTING PLANS

Can you switch plans?

Yes! You can switch laterally from one Computing Honours plan to another at any time of the year, at any point in your academic career right up until graduation. Students can also drop back from the Honours program to the General at any time. Some students choose this option when life circumstances change (family obligations, finances, a job offer, etc.) and they want to exit their academic career earlier. Students also have the option of coming back at a later date to resume their studies so they can complete their Honours degree.

If you select the Computing Major instead of the Computer Science Specialization, can you graduate without a minor? What’s the difference between plans?

Yes, absolutely. You can do a Major, a Major with a Minor, or a Specialization.

One thing to note about both the Major and the Computer Science Specialization is that they share the same list of focuses, and you must choose one. This is not the same as a Minor; it’s simply the focus that you want to follow. This focus will not be reflected on your transcript in the Major, but it does appear on your transcript in the Specialization.
It’s not necessary to add a Minor to your Computing Major, but it’s definitely something to consider if you have a strong interest in another field. You have to take bunch of electives anyway; it’s a good idea to look around the Arts and Science Academic Calendar to see if any other programs appeal to you. They may offer a Minor that you might want to pursue.

**My Specialization needs me to take non-Computing courses; this means the course code can not start with CISC, correct? What’s the difference between this and an elective?**

Computing course codes are CISC, COGS, SOFT, and COCA. However, other courses from outside of Computing may also be included in this list. Plans that have this requirement will list the specific subjects that are excluded on their outline on the Academic Calendar.

Elective units can be any course (limit of 6.0 units from outside of Arts and Science), any level, and any discipline, including Computing courses. The outside-of-Computing units are the same (any course, any level, any discipline) except those excluded Computing courses.
My Specialization has a ‘breadth requirement.’ What is this?

A breadth requirement requires the student to take courses outside of Computing – particularly in the Humanities and Social Sciences – as this creates a more well-rounded body of knowledge. Studying these seemingly unrelated subjects can add surprising depth and context to our chosen focus, opening the mind to new concepts and sparking ideas of how to apply your knowledge of Computer Science to broader fields.

This has been part of the curriculum design for some Specializations to meet the requirements for CIPS accreditation (currently being phased out after this cycle – more detail can be found here). While we have decided that maintaining our accreditation status with CIPS is not a priority, the curriculum design itself remains the same. As one of the most versatile and interdisciplinary degrees offered by Queen’s University, it is to your benefit to explore all the possible ways Computing can blend with and enhance other areas of study.

For the Film COCA, it says FILM 110 is required, but it was not offered this year. I messaged the COCA advisors, and they told me which alternative classes to take. When I select it on SOLUS, will this be accounted for?

It depends. Some course equivalencies are programmed into SOLUS already, so if you run a degree requirements check (AKA an academic advising report), this will tell you whether the alternate course is indeed showing up to satisfy that requirement. If it doesn’t, you’ll need to contact the department and the Undergrad Assistant can send a request to Student Services to make that adjustment for you.

Is it possible to switch from a General Computing plan to an Honours plan after getting the required grade in c121/124 in the first semester?

Any plan changes that require permission or special consideration will need to wait until the annual Plan Selection/Plan Change period in May. Once you have gotten the minimum requirements (2.6 cumulative GPA and at least a B in either CISC 121 or 124) you can apply for permission to upgrade to an Honours plan.

Regarding the 3 vs. 4 year plans: Does that include first year? Or would the whole degree take 4 to 5 years.

Yes, this includes the 1st year. Please keep in mind, however, that if you choose to do an internship (instead of doing a 4th year Capstone project), this will extend your studies by the length of your internship, either 12 or 16 months.
CIPS ACCREDITATION

What is CIPS?

The Canadian Information Processing Society (CIPS) is an accrediting body that represents Canadian industry standards in IT. CIPS accredits qualifying programs at post-secondary institutions that meet their standards. Our SODE and CSCI Specializations have a long history of being CIPS-accredited, which is a testament to the quality of our program. We have opted to not renew our accreditation with CIPS beyond the current cycle, which will affect these two plans. The School of Computing will continue to offer the same highly regarded degrees that we have always offered. Not renewing our accreditation with CIPS simply means that we are no longer relying on their organization to vouch for the quality of our program. If you are able to graduate by December 31st, 2028, your SODE or CSCI Specialization degree will be recognized as CIPS-accredited. Degrees granted beyond this date will not be CIPS-accredited.

Why did Computing decide to not renew their CIPS accreditation?

After weighing the benefits against the demands, it was decided that the benefits were not sufficient to warrant renewing accreditation. Some of our considerations are outlined below.

1. Program Quality Assurance – At the time the Software Design (SODE) and Computer Science (CSCI) Specializations were created in the early 2000’s, CIPS accreditation provided a valuable external review of our degree plans not available in another way. The University now has a Cyclic Program Review (CPR) process that provides a similar function but in a consistent way across all academic units.

2. Restrictions on program design – Renewing accreditation would mean “locking in” our program for another cycle. In a fast-paced industry with constantly evolving trends, we believe it’s important to remain flexible and ready to change to stay at the leading edge of current trends and innovations. This move releases our curriculum from certain requirements imposed by CIPS, allowing us to upgrade our plans when needed.

3. Value to graduates in their careers – Accreditation reduces the time needed to qualify for the Information Systems Professional certificate by about 2 years. However, while valued by some employers as a desirable asset, our graduates did not report that Information Systems Professional certification was valuable for most careers.
4. **Expense and Administration** – the accreditation license is an annual expense so we needed to determine whether the benefit outweighed the cost. We found that it did not. There is also related administrative overhead that will no longer put a strain on our resources.

For more information about this decision, please visit our [CIPS Accreditation Expiry Info](#) page.

**INTERNSHIPS AND CAREERS**

_It said that you can do QUIP after 2nd year but also says you need 108 credits. How do you get this many credits after 2 years? Don’t we usually get 30 credits per year?_

No, you must have **fewer** than 108 units to be eligible for an internship. This is because we want to ensure students are coming back to complete their degree at the end of their internship.

**How do internship units work?**

Taking an internship instead of the 4th year Capstone course will increase the number of required units for your degree plan from the usual 120 to either 126 (if taking the 1-year internship) or 129 (if taking the 16-month internship). The internships are comprised of 9.0 units (12-month) or 12.0 units (16-month) which are reflected on your transcript as COMP 39* courses. The Capstone/Internship section requirement for our plans is only 3.0 units. If taking a 3.0-unit Capstone course, this is built into the 120 units. The exception to this is the Software Development Specialization, which has a 6.0-unit requirement, which is also built into the usual 120 units.

The internship is a modification to your Honours plan. Extra units will now be required in addition to the usual 120 to reflect the units earned for the COMP 39* internship courses. 3.0 units of your internship credits will satisfy the 3.0 Capstone/Internship requirement (6.0 units for Software Design), and the rest satisfy the new 126- or 129-unit requirement. These extra units reflect that extra time you've put into your degree.

**What happens if I can’t find an internship on Career Services?**

The [Queen’s University Internship Program (QUIP)](#) Team is always happy to assist students with finding an appropriate internship. This includes helping you with your resume and applications or guiding you on searches outside of the job board. You can also seek out internships outside of the job board. An internship opportunity must meet certain
requirements, such as being at least 12-16 months long, and it must be in your field of study. If you have sourced out a possible opportunity, contact quip@queensu.ca with the details to see if it qualifies to satisfy your degree requirements.

Would you say there’s a significant difference in employability between the Computing Major and the Computer Science Specialization? Or is it too dependent on minor/electives?

If it’s important that your chosen area of study appears on your transcript, you should choose a Specialization. If you choose the Major, your area of study will not appear on your transcript (although, of course, a Minor in another discipline will, should you choose to pursue one). However, if you choose a Specialization, your area of study will be reflected on your transcript as part of your degree. The Major allows greater breadth of study and more flexibility, and the Specializations are more focused.

It’s worth saying that, while Computing offers one of the most in-demand programs at Queen’s, no degree can guarantee a job offer.

Having any of our 4-year Computing Honours degrees allows your future employer to check the “has degree” box when considering your application. They will also note that you earned your degree from one of the most prestigious universities in the world.

Beyond this, the one factor that has the most impact on employability is you: the effort you put into your studies will make the difference in employability when you graduate, because employers are looking for one thing and one thing only from your university education: competence. Can you do the thing? Can you make it work? Can you make their problem go away and make their business profitable? Therefore, it is more important that you really apply yourself to whichever degree plan you choose and make the best use of your time with us.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING**

*I want to make an appointment for academic advising.*

We're trying to take care of most advising over email whenever possible; this is to provide a more efficient workflow for us, and also to create a documented history of advising that we've done for you. In-person or virtual meetings can be set up if necessary, but we ask that you try emailing us first.
Send us an email at advising@cs.queensu.ca from your Queen’s email address, and please include your student number. This will start a ticket in our system. Give us a quick summary of the problem you’re trying to resolve, and then include details. If you have screenshots or supporting documents, feel free to include them.

Please only send one email per issue; sending a new email starts another ticket. If you want to reopen a ticket, go back to the last piece of correspondence in the email chain, and reply or forward it to us again without changing the subject line.

My issue is extremely urgent – the deadline is tomorrow!

We do our best to get to everyone’s requests as quickly as possible, especially when we know there are impending deadlines to meet, but this may not always be possible. Please keep in mind that our usual work hours are Monday to Friday, 8 AM to 4 PM.

Certain times of the year, such as before the add-drop deadlines (first three weeks of September and January), before and during Plan Selection (mid-April to early June), and during Course Enrollment (nearly all of July and late August, our busiest time of the year), can see a dramatic spike in email volume. Your wait time may be longer during these periods.

To avoid delays, or possibly missing a deadline, get in touch with us as soon as you identify the issue so it can be addressed early before the usual deadline rush.

I want a progress report to see what courses I need to take next. Can you audit my degree for me?

If you need to find out what courses to take next, or what’s left to take to graduate, please consult your Academic Advisement Reports (also known as a What-If report or AAR) which you can get through SOLUS. In most cases the AAR completely explains your situation. For help finding this information on SOLUS please visit the SOLUS Help page and go to the SOLUS Overview dropdown.

If you find an error in your AAR, please consult advising@cs.queensu.ca.

You can also email us if you’d like a copy of a Degree Self-Audit Worksheet for your plan. This is an Excel spreadsheet that includes instructions, comment tags, and formulas to assist you as you’re filling it out (contact us with any questions). This tool can be used as a handy visual checklist to quickly gauge where you’re at, and to help familiarize yourself with your plan requirements. Please note that these checklists are to be considered a GUIDE ONLY and are not official audits. Your plan requirements as they appear on SOLUS should be considered the authority.
The full official definition of each degree plan can be found in the Academic Calendar.

Please note that your requirements on SOLUS may differ from the current version of the plan on the Academic Calendar. This is because your requirements are based on the version of the plan as it was when you first registered. The requirements as outlined on SOLUS should be considered the authority as this is what Arts and Science will use to determine your eligibility to graduate. Archived versions of the Academic Calendar will be linked at the top of each plan’s page.

**I want to get my degree completed as quickly as possible. Can I take more than 5 courses per term? What about the Summer term? Or taking courses at other universities?**

While we can appreciate your desire to streamline and shorten your studies, we strongly recommend not being overambitious by signing up for more courses than the usual 5 per term; it is better to do fewer courses very well than to do many courses poorly (especially in your first year when your grades will be important for qualifying for automatic acceptance into your Honours plan). You can enroll in a 6th course if needed during the open enrollment period.

Some 1st year courses are available online over the Summer term. If you didn’t do well in, for example, CISC 121 or 124, you can retake them in the Summer and you will be caught up for the Fall. We do not offer 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year courses outside of Fall and Winter terms.

In special circumstances, it is possible for students to take courses at another university to be used as transfer credits. However, this is only done by a Letter of Permission (LOP) through Arts and Science Student Services and is subject to need. For example, if you are an international student whose student visa is set to expire at the end of the term, you need to graduate by the Spring of your 4th year, and you’re missing one or two courses that we aren’t offering that term, you could take them at, for example, Athabasca University.

For information about the LOP process, please visit the Arts and Science Course Planning & Options page. This PDF gives a good walkthrough of the specific steps.

We know your time is valuable, and we want to see you graduate on time. Reach out to us as you see potential roadblocks and we will do what we can to help you navigate them.
I have questions about combining my Computing Major with a Minor in another discipline/doing a dual degree.

Anytime a student has questions regarding a degree type that involves multiple departments, we refer them to Student Services in Arts and Science. We can only speak to the Computing degree requirements; the advisors in Arts and Science, however, have a broader scope and can advise you on how to meet the requirements of both. You can contact them at asc.studentservices@queensu.ca (please include your student number). Please visit the Arts and Science Advising page for more information about advising options.

I have questions about online courses.

Arts and Science Online administers all our online courses (held during the Spring/Summer term). Please contact them at asc.online@queensu.ca with any questions pertaining to these courses.

I'm interested in going on exchange.

All Exchange Programs are run through the International Programs Office at Queen's University.

Please visit their website at https://www.queensu.ca/ipo/contact for contact and more information.

I have been struggling with my studies and I need help! Is there tutoring available? Or other resources?

Yes! Please reach out to the Queen's Computing Students' Association (COMPSA) at academics@compsa.queensu.ca for support and to be paired with a peer tutor. COMPSA offers lots of support for Computing students both for your academics and for life outside the classroom.

Queen's Student Academic Success Services (SASS) also offers a wealth of resources to give student the tools they need to succeed in their studies. Please have a look through their site.

I've been feeling so overwhelmed! Is this normal?

Mental health is something that Queen's takes seriously. However, they make a point of differentiating between normal academic stress (which can be intense), and a decline in mental health to the point that it requires intervention from a healthcare provider, and
possibly merits accommodation (either temporary or permanent, depending on the condition).

Academic stress is normal and to be expected when undertaking a university degree. But if you find that your mental health has deteriorated and is worsening, that you have persistent symptoms that are interfering with your studies, or if you are feeling overwhelmed and stuck/trapped, please contact Student Wellness for assistance. There is a wealth of information on their website including links and contact information for immediate help.

**If you are in immediate crisis and at risk of harm**, call 911 or Queen’s 24-hour Campus Security (if applicable) at 613-533-6111.
Useful Contacts

Registrar’s Office - https://www.queensu.ca/registrar/
613-533-2040

Student Services - https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/undergraduate/student-services
asc.studentservices@queensu.ca
1st year advising: passhelp@queensu.ca
613-533-2470

Student Academic Success Services (SASS) - https://sass.queensu.ca/
analytic.success@queensu.ca
613-533-6315

COMPSA - https://www.compsa.ca/

ASUS - https://www.queensasus.com/

International Centre - https://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/
quic@queensu.ca
613-533-2604

QSAS (Accessibility Service) - https://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services

Student Wellness - https://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/
613-533-2506

Office of the University Ombudsperson - https://www.queensu.ca/ombuds/home
ombuds@queensu.ca

Campus Security - https://www.queensu.ca/security/
613-533-6111