

# PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY, B.DES.

**Begin Campus:** University Park

**End Campus:** University Park

## Program Description

The major in Professional Photography is a professional undergraduate degree in photography designed to provide in-depth, formal education that will prepare students for careers in client-based professional photography or related fields. Students enrolled in the program will acquire practical skills and learn creative techniques relevant to professional photographic image making. The degree program focuses on building and synthesizing career oriented competencies essential to photographers' professional, intellectual, and cultural lives.

The learning objectives and essential competencies of the Professional Photography major align with NASAD standards for undergraduate professional degrees. NASAD is the professional agency responsible for accrediting Penn State's art and design programs within the College of Arts and Architecture. This B. Des. in Professional Photography also addresses student career success and economic development.

## What is Photography?

Photography involves using image-making technologies to take visual samples of the world around us to create responses, representations, and interpretations that cause us to think about what we see and to question what we know. This creative and critical practice emerges from innumerable motivations that arise from a deep-felt desire for personal expression, or a belief that visual arts and design can influence how we encounter and understand everyday life. Whether exploring and applying photography as a means of responding to personal ideas and issues, or using image making to meet a client's expectations, the discipline requires a range of specialized knowledge and skills in the use of tools, techniques, technologies, and processes to enable working from a concept to finished photographic forms. Hence, developing your individual visual language as a photographer involves mastery of materials, equipment, and processes and developing a vision of aesthetic forms, functions, and content relationships.

## You Might Like this Program If...

Your personal interests and professional aspirations are inspired by the power of photography to reach into our lives to capture the diversity, complexity, and humanity. Virtually all visual information we encounter online and in print media relies on photography to communicate content in visually stimulating and aesthetically pleasing ways. Although photographic images are found in many disciplines, the art of photography remains firmly embedded within the imagination of seeing.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY (<https://arts.psu.edu/degrees/bachelor-of-design-in-professional-photography/>)

## Entrance to Major

Admission to the major in Professional Photography is determined by a portfolio review by faculty after the completion of: PHOTO 200 or PHOTO 202 and PHOTO 201.

## Entrance Procedures

Students interested in pursuing Professional Photography (B.DES) should follow the appropriate first year, change of major, or transfer application instructions found under Visual Arts at <https://arts.psu.edu/how-to-apply/#specific>.

## Retention Requirements

Retention will be determined through verification of sustained academic growth as demonstrated by earning of grades of C or higher within the major. Failure to do so is grounds for an academic warning, with clear written strategies and a time frame for the student to return to good standing.

## Degree Requirements

**For the Bachelor of Design degree in Professional Photography a minimum of 120 credits are required:**

| Requirement                | Credits |
|----------------------------|---------|
| General Education          | 45      |
| Electives                  | 15      |
| Requirements for the Major | 60      |

## Requirements for the Major

A grade of C or better is required for all courses in the major. To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn at least a C grade in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>).

| Code  | Title   | Credits |
|---|---|---------|
| <b>Prescribed Courses</b>                                 |   |         |
| <i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i> |   |         |
| PHOTO 201/<br>ARTH 250                                    | A Chronological Survey of Photography   | 3       |
| PHOTO 202   | Fundamentals of Professional Photography  | 3       |
| PHOTO 301   | Beyond Photoshop: Techniques in Digital Photographic Imaging                        | 3       |
| PHOTO 303   | Professional Photography: Studio Technique and Photocomposition                     | 3       |
| PHOTO 401   | Fashion Photography   | 3       |
| PHOTO 404   | Professional Photography Capstone Seminar: Self-Marketing and Professional Presence | 4       |
| PHOTO 406   | Product Photography   | 2       |
| PHOTO 407   | Portrait Photography  | 2       |
| PHOTO 495   | Internship  | 1       |
| <b>Additional Courses</b>                                 |   |         |
| <i>Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i> |   |         |
| Select 21 credits from the following:                     |   | 21      |
| AA 322  | Arts Marketing  |         |
| AA 324  | Arts Entrepreneurship and the Law   |         |
| AA 325  |   |         |
| AA 424  | Arts Entrepreneurship Capstone Research Project                                     |         |
| ART 122Y  | Commentary on Art   |         |
| ART 211Y  | Introduction to Digital Art and Design Criticism                                    |         |
| ART 411   | Seminar in Contemporary Art   |         |
| COMM 269  | Photojournalism   |         |

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| COMM 469  | Photography for the Mass Media                                  |
| GD 100    | Introduction to Graphic Design                                  |
| GD 200    | Graphic Design Studio I   |
| GD 201    | Typography  |
| GD 300    | Design Photography  |
| PHOTO 99  | Foreign Studies--Photo  |
| PHOTO 100 | Introduction to Photography                                     |
| PHOTO 101 | Culture of Photography  |
| PHOTO 199 | Foreign Studies--Photo  |
| PHOTO 200 | Photo Studio I  |
| PHOTO 210 | Introduction to Architectural Photography                       |
| PHOTO 295 | Internship  |
| PHOTO 296 | Independent Studies   |
| PHOTO 297 | Special Topics  |
| PHOTO 299 | Foreign Studies--Photo  |
| PHOTO 300 | Photo Studio II   |
| PHOTO 303 | Professional Photography: Studio Technique and Photocomposition |
| PHOTO 397 | Special Topics  |
| PHOTO 399 | Foreign Studies--Photo  |
| PHOTO 400 | Digital Photography in the Studio                               |
| PHOTO 402 | Photographic Narratives   |
| PHOTO 405 | Creative Projects in Photography                                |
| PHOTO 410 | Photographing Motion and Athletic Events                        |
| PHOTO 495 | Internship  |
| PHOTO 496 | Independent Studies   |
| PHOTO 497 | Special Topics  |
| PHOTO 499 | Foreign Studies--Photo  |

### Supporting Courses and Related Areas

*Supporting Courses and Related Areas: Require a grade of C or better*

Select 15 credits from any of the following areas in consultation with 15 an adviser (Must include 6 credits from history of the arts):

- Architecture (ARCH)
- Art (ART)
- Art Education (AED)
- Art History (ARTH)
- Arts and Architecture (A&A)
- Communications (COMM)
- Communications Arts and Sciences (CAS)
- Graphic Design (GD)
- Integrative Arts (INART)
- Landscape Architecture (LARCH)
- Theatre (THEA)

## General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements ([https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-](https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/)

[education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/](https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education-program/)) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

### Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

### Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

### Integrative Studies

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

### Exploration

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

## University Degree Requirements

### First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

### Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- **United States Cultures:** 3 credits
- **International Cultures:** 3 credits

### Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

### Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

## Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

## Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

## Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

## University Park

### Liz Agler

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## Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

## Professional Photography, B.Des. at University Park Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

### First Year

| Fall                                       | Credits Spring                               | Credits   |
|--|--|-----------|
| PHOTO 202 <sup>#*</sup>                    | 3 PHOTO 201 <sup>*#</sup>                    | 3         |
| ENGL 15, 15A, or 30H (GWS) <sup>†</sup>    | 3 Supporting Course <sup>*2</sup>            | 3         |
| ART 11 (or First-Year Seminar)             | 1 General Education Course                   | 3         |
| Supporting Course <sup>*2</sup>            | 3 General Education Course (US/IL)           | 3         |
| General Education Course (GQ) <sup>†</sup> | 3 General Education Course (GQ) <sup>†</sup> | 3         |
| General Education Course                   | 3  |           |
|  | <b>16</b>                                    | <b>15</b> |

### Second Year

| Fall                            | Credits Spring                               | Credits   |
|---------------------------------|--|-----------|
| General Education Course        | 3 ART 122Y, 211Y, or AED 211W <sup>*</sup>   | 3         |
| General Education Course        | 3 CAS 100A, 100B, or 100C (GWS) <sup>†</sup> | 3         |
| General Education Course        | 3 PHOTO 303 <sup>*</sup>                     | 3         |
| Supporting Course <sup>*2</sup> | 3 General Education Course                   | 3         |
| Supporting Course <sup>*2</sup> | 3 Supporting Course <sup>*2</sup>            | 3         |
|                                 | <b>15</b>                                    | <b>15</b> |

### Third Year

| Fall   | Credits Spring   | Credits   |
|--|--|-----------|
| PHOTO 301 <sup>*</sup>                               | 3 PHOTO 401 <sup>*</sup>                               | 3         |
| Additional Course for Major (see list) <sup>*1</sup> | 3 PHOTO 495 <sup>*</sup>                               | 1         |
| General Education Course (US/IL)                     | 3 ENGL 202A, 202B, 202C, or 202D (GWS) <sup>†</sup>    | 3         |
| General Education Course                             | 3 Additional Course for Major (see list) <sup>*1</sup> | 3         |
| Additional Course for Major (see list) <sup>*1</sup> | 3 Supporting Course <sup>*2</sup>                      | 3         |
|  | Elective   | 2         |
|  | <b>15</b>  | <b>15</b> |

### Fourth Year

| Fall   | Credits Spring   | Credits     |
|--|--|-------------|
| PHOTO 406 <sup>*</sup>                               | 2 PHOTO 404  | 4           |
| PHOTO 407 <sup>*</sup>                               | 2 Additional Course for Major (see list) <sup>*1</sup> | 3           |
| Additional Course for Major (see list) <sup>*1</sup> | 3 General Education Course (GHW)                       | 1.5         |
| General Education Course (GHW)                       | 1.5 Elective   | 3           |
| Elective   | 3 Elective   | 3           |
| Elective   | 3  |             |
|  | <b>14.5</b>  | <b>14.5</b> |

### Total Credits 120

\* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education

# Course is an Entrance to Major requirement

† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

<sup>1</sup> Additional Courses: Select 21 credits from the following list: AA 121, AA 300/400-level, ART 110, ART 122Y, ART 211Y, ART 411, ARTH 260, COMM 118, DART 202, FRNAR 100, GD 100, GD 110, GD 115N, PHOTO 99, PHOTO 100, PHOTO 101, PHOTO 199, PHOTO 200, PHOTO 210, PHOTO 295, PHOTO 296, PHOTO 297, PHOTO 299, PHOTO 300, PHOTO 397, PHOTO 399, PHOTO 400, PHOTO 402, PHOTO 404, PHOTO 405, PHOTO 410, PHOTO 495, PHOTO 496, PHOTO 497, & PHOTO 499

<sup>2</sup> Supporting Courses and Related Areas (15 credits):  
Select 15 credits from any of the following areas in consultation with an adviser (must include 6 credits from history of the arts):

- Architecture
- Art
- Art Education
- Art History
- Arts and Architecture
- Communications
- Communication Arts and Sciences
- Digital Arts and Media Design (DART)
- Graphic Design
- Integrative Arts
- Landscape Architecture
- Theatre

#### University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

All incoming Schreyer Honors College first-year students at University Park will take ENGL 137H/CAS 137H in the fall semester and ENGL 138T/CAS 138T in the spring semester. These courses carry the GWS designation and satisfy a portion of that General Education requirement. If the student's program prescribes GWS these courses will replace both ENGL 15/ENGL 30H and CAS 100A/CAS 100B/CAS 100C. Each course is 3 credits.

## Career Paths

The Bachelor of Design (B.DES.) in Professional Photography at Penn State University equips students with creativity, technical skills, and industry expertise essential for success. Graduates pursue careers in commercial, editorial, fine art, and digital media photography, tailoring their paths to their interests.

Commercial and editorial photography provide extensive opportunities. Graduates create visuals for advertisements, publications, and media outlets. Many work as commercial photographers, producing images for

brands and marketing campaigns. Others focus on editorial photography for magazines, news organizations, and digital platforms. Specializations such as portrait, fashion, product, food, event, documentary, and fine art photography offer additional career options.

Freelance and entrepreneurial paths allow graduates to establish independent careers. Some become creative directors, managing visual storytelling for businesses, while others develop stock photography portfolios for commercial use. A degree in Professional Photography from Penn State University prepares students for a dynamic industry, equipping them with the skills to make a lasting impact in visual storytelling.

## Careers

The creation and use of photographic images has increased exponentially since the development of digital photography in the mid-1990s, and you will encounter the use of photographic images across all disciplines and in many professional careers. Advanced camera and software technology has made taking and editing photographs substantially easier, and the quality achieved among practitioners has dramatically increased. Our goal is to help you achieve a balanced approach in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to develop your confidence and attitude in being able to pursue your professional interest in photography.

## Opportunities for Graduate Studies

A capstone photography project serves as both a culminating experience and a creative and critical assessment that will help you identify the distinctive look of your portfolio. Through peer review, and input from faculty who are all exhibiting photographic artists, you will receive mentoring about career options and further educational opportunities, such as applying for graduate school.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES (<https://arts.psu.edu/degrees/mfa-art/>)

## Professional Resources

- College Art Association (<https://www.collegeart.org>)
- National Art Education Association (<https://www.arteducators.org>)
- National Council of Art Administrators (<https://www.ncaaarts.org>)
- Pennsylvania Art Education Association (<https://sites.google.com/paea.org/paea/home/>)

## Accreditation

- National Association of Schools of Art and Design.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS ACCREDITATIONS (<https://arts.psu.edu/degree-programs/accreditation/>)

## Contact

### University Park

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<https://arts.psu.edu/academics/school-of-visual-arts/>