Hi! My name is Mia, I’m a senior Media Arts and Design major here at JMU, and I’m going to give an overview of your curriculum here at James Madison University. By the end of this video, you should be able to describe a liberal arts education, define a credit hour, and know the curriculum components of a Bachelor’s degree at JMU. The Bachelor’s degree provides you with a liberal arts education, which is an approach to education that provides you with broad knowledge of the wider world as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. Liberal arts education is characterized by challenging encounters with important issues, and more a way of studying than a specific course or field of study. It prepares you to deal with complexity, diversity, and change and this is the foundation of your Bachelor’s degree. To earn your Bachelor’s degree, it requires that you complete a minimum of 120 credit hours. Credit hours are often called just credits, and credits are the way we measure classwork. Each class is a certain number of credit hours that work toward your degree. Classes may range from 1 to 4 credits. Typically, most students set goals to complete 120 credits and graduate within four years. Not including summer, each academic year has two semesters, which totals eight semesters over a four-year college career. So, you need to earn 120 credit hours in eight semesters. This requires that you average 15 credits per semester. If you’re kinda freaked out about taking 14-16 credits during your first semester, don’t be afraid to meet with your Freshman Advisor about your options. While you want to average 15 credits
per semester, 12 credit hours is officially full-time status. Maintaining full-time status may be important because of your financial aid, health or car insurance, scholarships, student-athlete regulations, visa status, or other commitments. However, if you only average 12 credits per semester, it will take you five years to graduate. So, let’s now focus on the components of your Bachelor’s degree. One of the main components of every students’ curriculum is General Education. Every student participates in the General Education program, no matter their major, so it provides the common academic experience for all JMU students. GenEd provides a broad knowledge of liberal arts and science disciplines, and guides students to become skilled in questioning, investigating, analyzing, evaluating, and communicating. The GenEd program prepares students to become educated and enlightened citizens which is part of JMU’s mission. I personally loved it, because it’s an awesome way to shape who you are, how you think, and what you know about the world. I think of it as learning about the human experience. The GenEd program totals 41 credits, which is approximately one-third of your curriculum. In addition to your GenEd courses, every student also needs to complete an in-depth study in a specific area of interest, called a major. The number of credit hours needed to fulfill major requirements varies from 36 to 78 credit hours, because different majors have different requirements. Some GenEd classes may double-count, meaning they will count towards a GenEd requirement and a major requirement. In addition to
GenEd and major requirements, you also have degree requirements. There are different Bachelor’s
degrees, and the type of Bachelor’s degree you earn depends on your major. The Bachelor’s degrees are
typically referred to by their acronyms: B.A., B.B.A., B.F.A., B.M., B.S., B.S.N., or B.S.W. Each degree has a
different number of requirements, just like majors. Some majors provide a choice between degrees. The
most common choice is between a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science. When you complete the
Enrollment Worksheet in Module 3, you will see if your major gives a choice between Bachelor’s
degrees, like Anthropology. Additional classes you take outside of GenEds, your major, or degree are
electives. Electives are a great opportunity to pursue interests outside of your major or to declare a pre-
professional program, minor, or double-major. For example, I like writing in addition to studying digital
video and cinema, so I pursued a creative writing minor. After you arrive on campus to begin classes,
you can declare minors or double-majors if you choose. In summary, to earn your Bachelor’s degree,
you must successfully complete: General Education, major, and degree requirements, which total at
least 120 credit hours of classwork. As stated earlier, by now you should be able to describe a liberal arts
education, define a credit hour, and articulate the curriculum components of earning a Bachelor’s
degree at James Madison University. If you do not feel comfortable with these objectives, please take
time to re-watch this section of Module 2. Good luck!