

Yale University
Changes in the Undergraduate Course of Study and Graduation Requirements
Summary

A. The following were changes made to the distributional and graduation requirements from the 1970's through the early 2000's:

- **In 1976-77:** freshmen taking a foreign language can take as many as seven group I classes per year, and freshmen taking a laboratory class can take as many seven group IV classes per year.
- **In 1979-80:** entering freshmen must take two classes from each of the distributional groups by the end of their sophomore year.
- **In 1983-84:** students must demonstrate competence in a foreign language at the intermediate level before graduation, either by passing the appropriate class or by examination. In addition, any student who takes more than four course credits in language classes may offer as many as eight course credits in group I as credits counting toward the required twelve outside the distributional group, which includes the student's major.
- **In 1989-90:** students must earn 12 course credits outside the distributional group which includes his or her major. At least three course credits must be earned in each of the other distributional groups by graduation. In group IV, two out of the three credits must be earned in the natural sciences.

B. The following occurred in 2003:

On the recommendation of President Richard Levin on the occasion of the Yale Tercentennial, the Committee on Yale College Education (CYCE) was formed to thoroughly examine "the character of education in Yale College". The CYCE (chaired by the then Dean of Yale College, Richard Brodhead) made substantial and wide-sweeping recommendations related to undergraduate course of study and graduation requirements. Those recommendations were accepted and are incorporated into the *2005-06 Yale College Programs of Study* (Bulletin of Yale University, Series 101, Number 7, August 1, 2005) as follows:

Yale College Programs of Study 2005-06
(Bulletin of Yale University, Series 101, Number 7, August 1, 2005)

Chapter I

Distributional Requirements

[Distributional Requirements for the Class of 2009 and Subsequent Classes](#)

[Distributional Requirements for the Class of 2008 and Previous Classes](#)

The distributional requirements, described below, are intended to assure that by graduation all students have gained a broad acquaintance with a variety of fields of inquiry and approaches to knowledge. The distributional requirements are the only specific rules limiting the selection of courses outside a student's major program. The distributional requirements constitute a minimal education, not a complete one. They are a schematic representation of the least that an educated person should seek to know. They are to be embraced as starting points, not goals.

Distributional Requirements for the Class of 2009 and Subsequent Classes

Distributional requirements for the bachelor's degree. Students are required to take no fewer than two course credits in the humanities and arts, two course credits in the sciences, and two course credits in the social sciences. In addition to completing courses in these disciplinary areas, students must fulfill skills requirements by taking two course credits in quantitative reasoning, two course credits in writing, and courses to further their foreign language proficiency. Depending on their level of accomplishment in foreign languages at matriculation, students may fulfill this last requirement with one, two, or three courses or by a combination of course work and approved study abroad.

Courses that fulfill the distributional requirements are designated in the data line of course listings in chapter IV by the abbreviations Hu, Sc, So, QR, WR, and, for the foreign language requirement, L1, L2, L3, L4, or L5.

No courses taken on a Credit/D/Fail basis may be used to fulfill the distributional requirements.

Distributional requirements for the freshman, sophomore, and junior years. Students benefit most from fulfilling the distributional requirements early in their college careers and then building on their new knowledge and capabilities. Yale College recognizes this benefit by requiring partial fulfillment of the distributional requirements during the freshman, sophomore, and junior years.

Distributional requirements for the freshman year:

Students must have enrolled for at least one course credit in two skills categories (foreign language, quantitative reasoning, writing) by the end of the second term of enrollment in order to be eligible for promotion to sophomore standing.

Distributional requirements for the sophomore year:

Students must have enrolled for at least one course credit in each of the three disciplinary areas and for at least one course credit in each of the three skills categories by the end of the fourth term of enrollment in order to be eligible for promotion to junior standing.

Distributional requirements for the junior year:

Students must have completed all of their skills requirements by the end of the sixth term of enrollment in order to be eligible for promotion to senior standing.

Area requirement in the humanities and arts (two course credits). Every educated person must have some experience with the humanities and arts, those subjects that record the full range of human thought and accomplishment. A critical understanding of one's own civilization and culture enriches one's capacity to participate consciously in the life of our time. Studying other civilizations and cultures, both ancient and modern, provides insight into the experiences of others as well as a sharpened understanding of one's own. The humanities and arts expose students to some of the most enduring works of human thought and imagination, and cultivate in them an educated appreciation for the greatest achievements of the past and the present. Students who practice an art themselves experience the joy and the discipline of creation at first hand. The humanities are eminently practical but they also transcend mere utility. Students of the humanities and arts examine the value and purpose of all that surrounds them in a rigorous and systematic way; such examination is an essential preparation for careers in many areas of modern life. But independently of any specific application, study of the humanities and arts also fosters understanding and appreciation of—and delight in—some of the highest achievements of the human spirit.

Area requirement in the sciences (two course credits). Acquiring a detailed familiarity with several natural and applied sciences is a practical necessity for some students. For all students, however, being educated means developing a broad view of what science is, what it has achieved, and what it might continue to achieve. One can be aware that in the past three hundred years science has come to be synonymous with rational inquiry and knowledge without realizing what a scientist means by "knowing" or how some scientific theories are more prone to change than others. By studying a science one can develop the critical faculties that educated citizens need: an ability to evaluate the opinions of "experts," to distinguish quackery from responsible science, and to realize which things are known and which unknown, which are knowable and which unknowable, to science. Studying a science reveals new patterns of thought.

One can learn to appreciate both the close analysis and deductive reasoning of theoreticians and the careful observations and manipulative skill of experimentalists. Only by studying a science can one share the excitement, delight, puzzlement, and beauty that scientists find in their work. To know science is to appreciate a thousand intricate coherences in nature, which are hidden from casual observation but which, once known, lend richness to everyday life.

Area requirement in the social sciences (two course credits). Like the natural sciences, the social sciences rely heavily on the analysis of data, but their emphasis is on people, both as individuals and in communities. At a time when the world's population and its problems are increasing, the future of human achievements may depend significantly on insights attained through the social sciences. An educated person should have some understanding of what people have learned and are learning about living together. Modern Americans especially ought to have a knowledge of the cultures of eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as familiarity with western Europe and their own country. The Yale curriculum contains a wide variety of courses in these areas, dealing with social systems, governments, economies, histories, and cultures.

Skills requirement in foreign language (at least one course, depending on preparation). The study of languages has long been understood to be one of the distinctive and defining features of a liberal arts education, and in the world of the twenty-first century, knowledge of more than one language will become increasingly important. The benefits of language study include enhanced understanding of how languages work, often resulting in heightened sophistication in the use of one's own language; unmediated access to texts otherwise available only in translation, or not at all; and the ability to recognize and cross cultural barriers.

All Yale College students are required to engage in study of a foreign language, regardless of the level of study achieved at the time of matriculation. Students who have not studied a foreign language before arriving at Yale, and those whose prior language study does not qualify them for placement into a second-year course, are required to take three terms of foreign language study to fulfill the distributional requirement. Students who can place into the third term of a language program must successfully complete two terms, and those who can

place into a fourth term must successfully complete one term, of further study in that same language. Students who can demonstrate ability beyond the fourth term of language study, either by a score of 4 or 5 on an Advanced Placement test or by a requisite score on a placement test at Yale, must either successfully complete one term of further study in that language, or successfully complete instruction in a different language through the level designated L2. Students must enroll for at least one course credit toward satisfaction of the foreign language requirement by the end of the fourth term of enrollment, and the requirement must be completed by the end of the sixth term of enrollment. Students may complete an approved study abroad program in lieu of intermediate or advanced language study at Yale. Further details of the foreign language distributional requirement are listed under "[Distributional Requirements](#)" in chapter III.

Skills requirement in quantitative reasoning (two course credits). The mental rigor resulting from quantitative study has been celebrated for as long as formal education has existed, and applications of quantitative methods have proven critical to an astonishingly wide range of disciplines. Mathematics and statistics are the basic languages of the natural and the social sciences, and they have become useful tools in many of the humanities. Algorithms and formal logical constructs are the foundation of contemporary information technology, of mathematics itself, and of the rigorous dissection of logical arguments in any discipline. An educated person must be able to make, understand, and evaluate arguments on the basis of quantitative information.

To ensure that they have an opportunity to improve their quantitative reasoning skills, all students must take two courses designated QR in this bulletin; at least one of these courses must be taken by the fourth term, and two by the sixth term. Many such courses are taught through the departments of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science, but appropriate courses may also be found in Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Engineering, Geology and Geophysics, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, and Psychology.

Skills requirement in writing (two course credits). It is axiomatic that educated men and women should be able to express themselves effectively, both in speech and in writing. To suppose that anyone who cannot write clearly can think clearly is an illusion: words are the most basic tools of thought. Those who cannot use them skillfully will be impeded not only in communicating ideas to

others, but also in defining, developing, and understanding those ideas themselves.

All students are required to take two courses that include a focus on writing clearly and cogently. Courses that fulfill this requirement are designated WR in this bulletin; at least one of these courses must be taken by the fourth term of enrollment, and two by the sixth term. The English department offers many courses that provide special attention to prose composition, and freshmen should strongly consider taking one of their introductory courses: ENGL 114a, 115, 116b, 120a or b, 125, 127, or 129. In addition, courses in many other departments at Yale emphasize the art of writing from the perspective of their own disciplines.

Distributional Requirements for the Class of 2008 and Previous Classes

For the purpose of distribution in Yale College, courses are classified into four groups according to the following general scheme: *

Group I: language and literature, English and foreign, ancient or modern

Group II: architecture; art; classical civilization; film; history; history of art; history of science, history of medicine; humanities; music; philosophy; religious studies

Group III: anthropology; archaeology; economics; linguistics; political science; psychology; sociology

Group IV: astronomy; biology; chemistry; computer science; engineering; forestry and environmental studies; geology and geophysics; mathematics; molecular biophysics and biochemistry; physics; statistics.

*Some courses may fall into another distributional group in addition to the one indicated in this classification. The group number of a course is the roman numeral in the data line of the course listed in chapter IV.

Distributional requirements for the freshman year, for the first two years, and for the bachelor's degree. The distributional requirements seek to insure that students achieve breadth and depth in their program of study, and that in the first two years of their undergraduate education they become exposed to

different ideas and various ways of thinking by electing courses from a variety of departments. Many students come to Yale with advanced preparation in one or more fields. Early in their college careers, such qualified students ought to take advantage of any head start they may have in a subject to pursue it at a higher level than would otherwise be possible; a college course in a familiar subject at a more advanced level often discloses unfamiliar aspects of the subject. In addition, in disciplines like mathematics and languages, where the maintenance and improvement of skills greatly depend on continuity of application, students ought not lightly to consider interrupting the progress of their studies during their first years of college. During these years, nevertheless, they should also explore some subjects that they have never studied before. At the beginning of sophomore year students are expected to make at least a tentative choice of the department or program in which they will major; science majors must do so. In choosing freshman and sophomore courses, therefore, students should give attention to the prerequisites for any major in which they anticipate having a particular interest. But they should not close their minds to other possibilities. They should use the first year to explore, and then not hesitate to change their plans during the second year. Students who have selected courses wisely will have the groundwork to enter most majors.

For these reasons, in addition to the distributional requirements for the bachelor's degree, there are two sets of distributional requirements that students are expected to fulfill before the end of their sophomore year: one for the freshman year and one for the first two years.

Distributional requirements for the freshman year:

Freshmen must enroll for at least two course credits in Group I or II and two course credits in Group III or IV. They may elect no more than four course credits in a single department, and no more than six course credits in a single distributional group (except that a student taking a course in a foreign language may elect as many as seven course credits in Group I, and a student taking a laboratory course may elect as many as seven course credits in Group IV).

Distributional requirement for the first two years:

In meeting the distributional requirements for the bachelor's degree, the student must enroll for at least two course credits in each of the four distributional groups by the end of the student's first four terms of enrollment.

Distributional requirements for the bachelor's degree:

To qualify for the bachelor's degree, a student must successfully complete at least twelve course credits drawn from outside the distributional group that includes the major. At least three course credits must be earned in each one of the three distributional groups falling outside the major; for a student whose major lies in Group I, II, or III, at least two of the three course credits in Group IV must be earned in the natural sciences. In addition, a student must fulfill the foreign language requirement by demonstrating competence in a foreign language at the intermediate level. Acceleration credits may not be employed to meet any of the distributional requirements for the bachelor's degree except for the foreign language requirement. For the sake of this requirement, "natural science" refers to Group IV courses (except mathematical, applied mathematical, and computational courses) in the following departments or programs: Applied Physics; Astronomy; Biomedical, Chemical, Electrical, Environmental, and Mechanical Engineering; Chemistry; Ecology and Evolutionary Biology; Engineering and Applied Science; Forestry & Environmental Studies; Geology and Geophysics; History of Science, History of Medicine; Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry; Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology; and Physics.

A student may apply no more than one course credit earned on the Credit/D/Fail basis (see "[Credit/D/Fail Option](#)" in chapter III) in any distributional group toward satisfaction of the distributional requirements for the bachelor's degree.

A student is required to demonstrate competence at the intermediate level in a

foreign language either upon entrance or before graduation, preferably by the end of the junior year. This requirement may be met by presenting an appropriate Advanced Placement test score, or by passing an examination at Yale, or by passing intermediate courses in a foreign language at Yale. Details about the foreign language requirement are contained in chapter III under "[Requirements for the B.A. or B.S. Degree.](#)"

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