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# THE CURRICULUM

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The University of Chicago College curriculum has three components: general education requirements (1500 units), a major (900–1900 units), and electives (800–1800 units). A minimum of 4200 units of credit (forty-two 100-unit courses) is required for the undergraduate degree. Of all credits earned, at least 3800 must be earned via course enrollment, as opposed to credit earned via examination.

Students choose courses across the curriculum in consultation with College advisers and faculty counselors. Courses valued at less than 100 units may not be used to satisfy degree requirements.

## GENERAL EDUCATION

General education requirements are designed to teach the skills of critical inquiry, argumentation, and analytical thinking in both quantitative and qualitative settings. These requirements are largely completed with integrated, often interdisciplinary, sequences comprised of two or three courses. (Note: The courses designed to satisfy these requirements cannot be replaced by other courses, except in the sciences, as indicated. Substitutes for general education courses are rarely approved (1) to accommodate a second major or a minor, or (2) to avoid curricular and scheduling conflicts that result from postponing general education requirements until a student's third or fourth year.)

Meant to be a foundation for later study at the College, the general education requirements are a quintessential element of the University of Chicago experience and should be completed by the end of the second year.

These requirements are completed with 1500 units of credit (fifteen 100-unit courses) spread over seven areas of study. These seven general education requirements fall into three broad categories. Students must also satisfy a language competence requirement, which is outlined below. All courses used to satisfy general education requirements must be taken for quality grades.

### 1. Humanities, Civilization Studies, and the Arts (total: 600 units/6 quarter courses)

Students take a total of six quarter courses in this category, distributed in the following way: at least two quarters in the humanities (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/humanities/>), at least two quarters in civilization studies (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/civilizationstudies/>), and at least one quarter in the arts (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/artscore/>). The remaining (sixth) course may be taken in any one of these categories. Each of these requirements has its own detailed page under the heading "The Curriculum" in this catalog.

An essential component of general education is learning how to appreciate and analyze texts intellectually, historically, and aesthetically. Through this general education requirement, students learn how to interpret literary, philosophical, and historical texts in depth; how to identify significant intellectual problems posed by those texts; and how to discuss and write about them perceptively and persuasively. They also learn how to study a visual or performing art form and how to study texts and art forms within a specific cultural and chronological frame.

### 2. Natural Sciences (Biological Sciences and Physical Sciences) and Mathematical Sciences (total: 600 units/6 quarter courses)

Students take a total of six quarter courses in this category, distributed in the following way: at least two quarters of physical sciences (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/physicalsciences/>), at least two quarters of biological sciences (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/biologicalsciencescore/>), and at least one in mathematical sciences (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/mathematicalsciencescore/>). The remaining (sixth) course may be taken in any one of these categories, unless calculus is being used to satisfy the requirement in mathematical sciences. In that case, the student must take two calculus courses for the general education requirement. In general, be aware that a student's major and/or preparation for the health professions may dictate which of the available options the student should select.

Courses and sequences in the natural sciences are designed to explore significant features of the natural universe and to examine the exciting process of scientific inquiry. These courses consider the powers and limitations of diverse forms of scientific observation, scientific reasoning, and natural laws. Courses in the mathematical sciences develop the powers of formal reasoning through use of precise artificial languages found in mathematics, computer science, statistics, or formal logic.

Each of these requirements has its own detailed page under the heading "The Curriculum" in this catalog.

### 3. Social Sciences (total: 300 units/3 quarter courses)

Each of these year-long (three-quarter) social sciences (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/socialsciences/>) sequences introduces fundamental questions and theories from the social sciences and shows how they enhance our understanding of important issues facing the world. Some sequences focus on classic texts, others on substantive fields of inquiry or research methodologies, but all explore how the social sciences formulate questions and inquire into the nature of social life through acts of imagination as well as through

systematic analysis. The social sciences general education curriculum requires active engagement in small seminars, close reading, and analytic writing; some sequences may also include lectures.

Courses must be taken in sequence. Once students begin a sequence, they are expected to remain in the same sequence. This requirement has its own detailed page under the heading "The Curriculum" in this catalog.

## MAJOR PROGRAMS

More than a set of course credits, a sound major is an effort to understand the methods and experience of a discipline or interdisciplinary field. Majors complement the breadth of the University of Chicago general education requirements with an opportunity to come to grips with the depth of knowledge and the complexities of developing knowledge in a particular area of inquiry. Majors range from ten to nineteen courses. Each major is described in detail in the Programs of Study (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/programsofstudy/>) section of the catalog.

More than half of the requirements for a major must be met by registering for courses bearing University of Chicago course numbers. Courses used to meet general education requirements cannot also be counted toward a major.

Starting in the Spring Quarter of their first year, students can officially declare a major through the student portal ([my.uchicago.edu](http://my.uchicago.edu) (<https://my.uchicago.edu/>)). They are encouraged to meet with their College adviser and/or the director of undergraduate studies in the department as part of that process.

**The following major programs are available in the:**

### Biological Sciences Collegiate Division (BSCD)

- Biological Sciences
- Neuroscience

### Humanities Collegiate Division (HCD)

#### Art History

- Cinema and Media Studies
- Classical Studies
- Cognitive Science
- Comparative Literature
- Creative Writing
- East Asian Languages and Civilizations
- English Language and Literature
- Fundamentals: Issues and Texts
- Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Germanic Studies
- Inquiry and Research in the Humanities
- Jewish Studies
- Linguistics
- Media Arts and Design
- Medieval Studies
- Music
- Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
- Philosophy
- Religious Studies
- Romance Languages and Literatures
- Russian and East European Studies
- South Asian Languages and Civilizations
- Theater and Performance Studies
- Visual Arts

### Physical Sciences Collegiate Division (PSCD)

- Astrophysics
- Biological Chemistry
- Chemistry
- Computational and Applied Mathematics
- Computer Science
- Data Science
- Environmental Science
- Geophysical Sciences
- Mathematics
- Molecular Engineering
- Physics
- Statistics

### Social Sciences Collegiate Division (SSCD)

- Anthropology

Comparative Human Development  
 Critical Race and Ethnic Studies  
 Economics  
 Environmental and Urban Studies  
 Environment, Geography, and Urbanization  
 Global Studies  
 History  
 History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Science and Medicine  
 Human Rights  
 Latin American and Caribbean Studies  
 Law, Letters, and Society  
 Political Science  
 Psychology  
 Public Policy Studies  
 Race, Diaspora, and Indigeneity  
 Sociology

## ELECTIVES

The number of courses required for a major primarily determines the number of general electives required for an individual student. A student needs at least forty-two 100-unit courses to graduate: fifteen toward general education and twenty-seven more split between the major and electives. Programs that specify thirteen courses require fourteen electives; twelve-course majors require fifteen electives, and so on.

Additionally, the amount of credit (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/examinationcreditandtransfercredit/>) by examination (e.g., AP, IB, placement credit, etc.) may also impact the number of electives required. For students matriculating in Autumn 2017 or later, of the 4200 units required to graduate, at least 3800 units must be completed via course enrollment, i.e., not credit by examination. For example, a student who satisfies more than 400 units of general education or major requirements through examination may increase the number of electives required.

Elective courses may be taken in any subject matter or discipline, including the same discipline as the student's major. They provide students the opportunity to shape their studies toward their distinctive curiosities and interests. At their broadest, they provide an opportunity to explore freely across the richness of opportunities for learning at the University of Chicago.

Courses taken in exploration of alternative majors and in study abroad programs, as well as course requirements completed by examination, are often included in electives. Some students also choose to use groups of electives to create minors (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/minors/>) or second majors. These options, though suitable ways to formalize students' interests outside their major, should not be undertaken in the mistaken belief that they necessarily enhance a student's transcript. Courses taken as electives should not displace courses in, and should not displace attention to, the student's general education program and major.

Credit for language courses, whether it is earned by course registration or petition, is usually counted toward electives, unless a major requires or permits language courses for credit as part of the major. Courses used to satisfy the language competence requirement ordinarily contribute to the elective totals.

## MINOR PROGRAMS

Some majors offer minors to students in other fields of study, and a few programs offer minors only. A minor requires five to seven courses, all of which count toward the student's general elective totals. Courses in a minor cannot be (1) double counted with the student's major(s) or with other minors, or (2) counted toward general education requirements. Courses in a minor must be taken for quality grades, and more than half of the requirements for a minor must be met by registering for courses bearing University of Chicago course numbers. For specific requirements, see the descriptions of the programs listed below that appear elsewhere in this catalog.

Students can indicate their interest in a minor via the student portal ([my.uchicago.edu](http://my.uchicago.edu) (<https://my.uchicago.edu/>)), but can only officially declare a minor by meeting with the director of undergraduate studies in the department and with their College adviser. Students submit to their College adviser the director's approval for the minor on a form obtained from the adviser. The deadline for declaring a minor is Spring Quarter of a student's third year.

A full list of minors offered by the College can be found on the Minors page of this catalog (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/minors/>).

While not a minor, the Chicago Studies Program (<http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/>) offers a certificate for students who complete a series of courses and cocurricular activities related to the city of Chicago.

## LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

Students in the College are required to possess understanding of more than one culture and to demonstrate competence in a language other than English. The language competence requirement must be met by demonstrating linguistic proficiency equivalent to one year of college-level study. For information about which

languages are currently being taught and which may be used to meet the language competence requirement, visit [humanities.uchicago.edu/about/languages-uchicago/](https://humanities.uchicago.edu/about/languages-uchicago/).

Students who matriculate in or after September 2009 may meet the language competence requirement in one of the following ways:

- passing a College-administered competency examination. The language competency exams are given each Winter Quarter; students can sign up on the College Language Competency Requirement page (<https://languageassessment.uchicago.edu/competency/>). To qualify for the competency exam, students must have placed into the second year of that language or completed an approved beginning-level sequence at another institution with a C or above (see Transfer Credit (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/transfercredit/>) rules);
- completing (with a quality grade) the third course of a first-year language sequence or a higher-level course offered at the University of Chicago;
- receiving a score of 5 on an AP examination in Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, or Spanish, or a score of 5 or above on an IB Standard Level (SL) or Higher Level (HL) exam in a foreign language;
- placing into 10300 or higher in a foreign language offered at the University of Chicago, then participating in one of the College's study abroad programs (visit [study-abroad.uchicago.edu](http://study-abroad.uchicago.edu) for more information) where that language is spoken and completing (with a quality grade) a language course at the intermediate or advanced level;
- participating in a College-approved one-quarter intensive foreign language study abroad program and completing all required courses with a quality grade (visit [study-abroad.uchicago.edu](http://study-abroad.uchicago.edu) for more information);
- passing one of the College's Practical or Advanced Language Proficiency assessments in a foreign language. File the Language Petition (<https://college.uchicago.edu/advising/forms-and-petitions/>), using the second option, to complete the requirement; or
- taking approved intermediate-level (or above) courses at another institution and passing with a B or above. (See Transfer Credit (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/transfercredit/>) rules.)

Students who are foreign nationals may meet the language competence requirement if their formal schooling experience in a country other than the United States enables them to demonstrate the criteria of cultural understanding and language competence described above. They must submit a petition (<https://college.uchicago.edu/advising/forms-and-petitions/>) to Catherine Baumann (Cobb 214, 773.702.8008, [cbauman@uchicago.edu](mailto:cbauman@uchicago.edu)). Supporting documentation must also be provided; the requirement is not automatically waived.

NOTE: Students are strongly urged to complete the language competence requirement in their first two years in the College. Students who wish to establish language proficiency via summer course work should see the Summer Language Institute (<https://summerlanguages.uchicago.edu/>)'s offerings.

Meeting the language competence requirement may count toward components to earn Global Honors (<https://languages.uchicago.edu/global-honors/>). Students are also encouraged to work toward Practical and Advanced Foreign Language Proficiency Certifications. More information about these certifications can be found on the Foreign Language Proficiency page (<https://languageassessment.uchicago.edu/flpc/>).

## PETITIONS

Any student who wishes to appeal for special consideration under a College regulation or an interpretation thereof may file a petition (<https://humanities-web.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/college-prod/s3fs-public/documents/GeneralPetition.pdf>) with the Dean of Students in the College. Students are encouraged to speak to their adviser for more information.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education is not required for an undergraduate degree. However, students are encouraged to pursue physical fitness as part of their College experience. For further information on fitness opportunities, visit [athletics.uchicago.edu](http://athletics.uchicago.edu) (<http://athletics.uchicago.edu>).

## ARCHIVED CATALOGS

Students fulfill requirements that are in place when they enter the College. For more information on the requirements for students who entered the College between 1995 and 2021, refer to the appropriate archived editions of the College Course Catalog (<http://collegecatalog.uchicago.edu/thecollege/archives/>).

