UNDERGRADUATE GUIDE

REQUIREMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

REQUIREMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

This is a summary of the Requirements for Undergraduate Degrees policy. Click here *(*https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1060/*) to view the official policy in its entirety in the UW-Madison Policy Library.*

The University of Wisconsin–Madison sets minimum standards that must be met by all students pursuing an undergraduate degree. The information in the following paragraphs provides general information about study at UW–Madison. Requirements may vary among the schools and colleges, and for specific programs. Students should learn about and understand the specific requirements for their program of study.

TOTAL DEGREE CREDITS

To receive a bachelor's degree from UW–Madison, students must earn a minimum of 120 degree credits (which includes AP, IB and other test credit, transfer credit, and retroactive credit). Requirements for some programs may exceed 120 degree credits. Students should consult with their college or department advisor for information on specific credit requirements. Undergraduate Majors (p.).

RESIDENCE CREDIT

Degree candidates are required to earn a minimum of 30 credits in residence at UW–Madison. "In residence" means on the UW–Madison campus with an undergraduate degree classification. “In residence” credit also includes UW–Madison courses offered in distance or online formats, as credits earned in UW–Madison Study Abroad/Study Away programs. Some schools and colleges may have additional requirements concerning courses taken in residence; students should refer to the specific school or college section of the *Guide* or consult with an advisor.

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR DECLARATION

This is a summary of the Undergraduate Major Declaration policy. Click here *(*https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1009/*) to view the official policy in its entirety in the UW-Madison Policy Library.*

Undergraduate degrees at UW–Madison presume that students are completing a program of study that consists of a degree program that combines the requirements for the degree with focused study in a discipline, or that combines school or collegewide requirements with an undergraduate major in which they pursue focused study. All undergraduates are expected to have declared or to have been admitted to their focused area of study by the end of the semester in which they have accumulated 86 credits. Students who have not met this expectation may be prevented from enrolling in future terms until they meet with their advisor. Some schools and colleges have additional requirements governing when majors may be declared; students should refer to the specific school or college section of the *Guide* and consult with an advisor about declaring their major.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

Undergraduate students must maintain the minimum academic thresholds, including the minimum grade point average specified by the school, college, or academic program to remain in good academic standing. Students whose academic performance drops below these minimum thresholds will be placed on academic probation.

GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

This is a summary of the General Education Requirements policy. Click here *(*https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1059/*) to view the official policy in its entirety in the UW-Madison Policy Library.*

All undergraduate students at UW–Madison must complete the university-wide General Education Requirements, which are designed to convey the essential core of an undergraduate education. This core establishes a foundation for living a productive life, being a citizen of the world, appreciating aesthetic values, and engaging in lifelong learning in a continually changing world. These requirements provide for breadth across the humanities and arts, social studies, and natural sciences; competence in communication, critical thinking, and analytical skills necessary for success in college and beyond; and investigation of the issues raised by living in a culturally diverse society. This core is intended to provide students with intellectual and practical skills, basic knowledge of human cultures and the physical world, strategies for understanding these topics, and tools intended to contribute to their sense of personal and social responsibility. General Education complements the work students do in their majors and degrees. Together, these requirements help students learn what they need to know not just for making a living, but also for making a life.

Completing the General Education Requirements is an important part of achieving these competencies, and to do so, students choose from many courses in communication, ethnic studies, quantitative reasoning, and breadth of study across disciplines in the natural sciences, humanities, literature, and arts, and social and behavioral sciences.

Each school and college may choose to allow General Education courses to count toward other degree and/or major requirements. Students should always check with their advisors to discuss any additional degree requirements and determine if students are required to take specific General Education courses or to complete the requirements in a particular order. Students should review their Degree Audit (DARS) report to see how they are progressing toward fulfilling the General Education requirements. Please refer to this website (https://gened.wisc.edu/) for more information about the requirements.

The university-wide General Education requirements are:

BREADTH, 13–15 CREDITS, DISTRIBUTED OVER THREE AREAS

All students must complete 13–15 credits of coursework intended to provide a **breadth** of experience across the major modes of academic inquiry. This requirement encourages students to adopt a broad intellectual perspective, to examine the world through investigative, critical, and creative strategies practiced in the natural

(computational, biological, and physical) sciences, social and behavioral sciences, as well as in the arts and humanities.

Learning Outcomes

Students acquire critical and creative thinking skills as well as enhance their problem-solving skills through a breadth of study across the humanities and arts, social studies, computational, biological sciences and physical sciences. In courses satisfying the Breadth requirement, students will:

- Articulate examples of significant contributions to human understanding achieved through various "ways of knowing" found in the arts and humanities; social and behavioral sciences; and computational, biological, and physical sciences
- Recognize and articulate the ways in which different disciplines approach questions that call upon different tools of inquiry, understanding, and creative enterprise
- Identify ways in which multiple tools of inquiry and understanding can be used to achieve greater insight into resolving "big" questions (e.g., climate change, poverty, global health etc.), evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of those approaches, and understanding which complementary approaches will help achieve meaningful change
- Evaluate different modes of inquiry across the humanities and arts; social studies; computational, biological, and physical sciences, and identify strengths and weaknesses of those approaches across disciplines when approaching a question

To achieve these outcomes, students are required to complete courses in the following areas.

- Natural Science, 4 to 6 credits, consisting of one 4- or 5-credit course with a laboratory component; or two courses providing a total of 6 credits
- Humanities/Literature/Arts, 6 credits
- Social Studies, 3 credits

This requirement challenges students to understand that there are many ways to research, understand, communicate about, and interpret creatively the world around us. These "ways of knowing" intersect and overlap, and the ideas presented in one area will often inform and transform what students know and how they think about the others. Students develop skills that help them make informed decisions in a wide range of political, economic, and social contexts, to think critically about the world, to better understand their own and others' experience, and to behave in socially responsible ways. (For more information about how this exposure to breadth of inquiry and expression enriches students' undergraduate experience and complements intensive study in the major, please see the General Education Requirements (https://gened.wisc.edu/) website.)

COMMUNICATION, 3 TO 5/6 CREDITS

The **Communication** requirement helps to ensure that all graduates of UW–Madison acquire essential communication and research-gathering skills necessary for success in university course work and beyond. Communication–A (**Comm–A**) and Communication–B (**Comm–B**) courses train students to gather and assess information from a variety of sources and to present different kinds of information, insight, and analysis to diverse audiences. These courses are essential for students' career success and their preparation for public life in a rapidly changing world. While Comm–A courses focus exclusively on essential communication skills, Comm–B courses provide content instruction in a specific discipline and teach research, writing, and communication skills in conjunction with the course content. Comm–B courses are offered by departments across campus and vary widely in topic, content, and format.

Learning Outcomes

Students develop skills that enable them to be effective communicators in and out of the classroom. In courses satisfying the Communication requirement, students will:

- Make effective use of information retrieved, organized, and synthesized from appropriate sources
- Present ideas and information clearly and logically to achieve a specific purpose
- Make effective use of communicative forms appropriate to a specific discipline and adapted to the intended audience
- Use appropriate style and conventions associated with particular communicative forms, genres or disciplines

To achieve these outcomes, students must complete the following Communication requirements:

Part A. Literacy Proficiency.

2–3 credits at first-year level dedicated to reading, listening, and discussion, with emphasis on writing. While most incoming freshmen are required to complete coursework to fulfill this requirement, students may be exempted from Part A by approved college course work while in high school, AP test scores, or placement testing. Students are expected to satisfy this requirement by the end of their first year of undergraduate study.

Learning Outcomes

- Use the four modes of literacy: writing, speaking, reading, and listening to formulate strategies for critical thinking
- Use information-seeking skills to demonstrate the four modes of literacy

Part B. Enhancing Literacy Proficiency.

2–3 credits of more advanced coursework for students who have completed or been exempted from Part A. Students should consult with the appropriate undergraduate advisor about when this requirement should be completed. Courses that satisfy this requirement are offered in many fields of study; although a wide variety of courses fulfill this requirement, students are encouraged to select a course most in keeping with their interests or other requirements of their intended field(s) of study.

Learning Outcomes

- Identify and make skillful use of relevant, reliable, and high-quality research sources appropriate to the course subject and discipline
- Make productive use of the writing process, including brainstorming, outlining, drafting, incorporating feedback, and revising, to develop a fledgling idea into a formal paper, presentation, and/or project

- Share research, course content, or creative activity in writing and at least one other mode of communication relevant to the discipline. Other modes of communication might include presentations using one or more media, debate, discussion, poster presentations, and other forms of expression that convey course content

Please note: Because English is the language of instruction at UW–Madison, Communication A and B courses are taught in English, and student work in them is also completed in English.

ETHNIC STUDIES, 3 CREDITS

The **Ethnic Studies** requirement is intended to increase understanding of the culture and contributions of persistently marginalized racial or ethnic groups in the United States, and to equip students to respond constructively to issues connected with our pluralistic society and global community. Because this increased understanding is expected to have a positive effect on campus climate, students are expected to complete this requirement within the first 60 credits of undergraduate study

Learning Outcomes

Students draw connections between historical and present day circumstances and consider perceptions and cultural assumptions when examining questions and making decisions. In courses satisfying the Ethnic Studies requirement, students will:

- Articulate how the past has affected present day circumstances regarding race and racial inequities in the U.S.
- Recognize and question cultural assumptions and knowledge claims as they relate to race and ethnicity
- Demonstrate self-awareness and empathy toward the cultural perspectives and worldviews of others
- Apply course concepts to their lives outside the classroom by respectfully participating in our multicultural society

The skills listed above apply to students' lives inside and outside the classroom, and by pursuing these objectives, students will further enhance their ability to participate in a multicultural society more effectively, respectfully, and meaningfully. Students complete this requirement by taking one course of at least 3 credits that is designated as an Ethnic Studies course.

QUANTITATIVE REASONING, 3 TO 6 CREDITS

Quantitative Reasoning is the process of forming conclusions, judgments or inferences from quantitative information. The Quantitative Reasoning requirement at UW–Madison has two parts: Part A and B. **Quantitative Reasoning A** courses provide students with skills in mathematics, computer science, statistics or formal logic that are needed for dealing with quantitative information. The acquired skills are broad-based in order to have a positive impact on the readiness of students to take a Quantitative Reasoning B course in a variety of disciplines. **Quantitative Reasoning B** courses allow students to enhance their Quantitative Reasoning Proficiency in a more advanced setting, where they make significant use of quantitative tools in the context of other course material. To ensure timely completion of the undergraduate degree, students must demonstrate minimum math proficiency before they can enroll in a Quantitative Reasoning Part A course. They should complete Part A of the Quantitative Reasoning requirement by the end of their first year, and must complete Part A before they enroll in Part B.

Quantitative Reasoning Part A:

An an introductory course in college-level mathematics, computer science, statistics, or formal logic that is intended to prepare students for more advanced work in a disciplinary context.

Learning Outcomes

- Solve problems using quantitative information and the tools of college#level mathematics, computer science, statistics or formal logic
- Draw conclusions using quantitative information and the tools of college#level mathematics, computer science, statistics or formal logic
- Develop models and/or interpret data and/or devise algorithm using quantitative information and the tools of college#level mathematics, computer science, statistics or formal logic

Quantitative Reasoning Part A Requirement

Can be satisfied by approved college work while in high school, AP test scores, placement testing, or taking a 3-credit course at UW–Madison with a Quantitative Reasoning A designation.

Quantitative Reasoning Part B:

In the disciplinary or interdisciplinary context of a course designed to build on the tools of college-level mathematics, computer science, statistics, or formal logic.

Learning Outcomes

- Manipulate quantitative information to create models, and/or devise solutions to problems using multi#step arguments, based on and supported by quantitative information
- Evaluate models and arguments using quantitative information
- Express and interpret in context models, solutions, and/or arguments using verbal, numerical, graphical, algorithmic, computational or symbolic techniques

Quantitative Reasoning Part B Requirement

Can be satisfied by taking a designated QR-B course of at least 3 credits in a variety of fields of study, which enhances students' proficiency in this domain. Students are encouraged to select a course in keeping with their interests or to satisfy other requirements for their major or degree program.

IDENTIFYING COURSES THAT MEET GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

The university offers hundreds of courses that meet the requirements described above. Students should consider their own interests and check with their advisor when deciding which courses to complete. Please note that many undergraduate programs of study have breadth requirements that go beyond these basic university-wide requirements.

The following language is used in the UW–Madison course listings to indicate how courses count toward satisfying the communication, quantitative reasoning, and ethnic studies portions of the General Education Requirements. Courses that satisfy these requirements are also tagged with a mortarboard (graduate cap) symbol. #

- Communication Part A
- Communication Part B
- Ethnic Studies
- Quantitative Reasoning Part A
- Quantitative Reasoning Part B

Note: Some Communication Part B courses carry Communication B credit only at the lecture or section level and/or only in certain semesters; these courses will be indicated in the Schedule of Classes.

Course descriptions also include information about whether courses meet General Education Humanities, Natural Science, or Social Studies Breadth Requirements. (Click on course numbers in the Guide to see this information.) Students should also be aware that each school and college may, at its own discretion, designate additional courses that satisfy these requirements. For this reason, students should consult their advisors to obtain information about how these requirements are implemented in the school or college in which they are enrolled.

GENERAL EDUCATION POLICIES

- Only undergraduate-level college courses may satisfy General Education Requirements.
- Directed or Individualized Study may not be used to satisfy General Education Requirements.
- Because these requirements assume that students are engaged in focused study within the designated area of general education, requirements cannot be met with portions of courses.
- Exemption from General Education: All students are required to meet the fundamental degree requirements of the university, which include general education.
- Disability-Based Waivers: The university has determined that waivers to the communication and quantitative reasoning portions of the general education component would fundamentally alter the nature of the University of Wisconsin–Madison degree. Students should not expect to obtain disability-based waivers to the communication and quantitative reasoning portions of the General Education Requirements.
- Pass/Fail: Effective fall 2012, all courses taken to meet the University General Education Requirements must be taken on a graded basis. These grades are included in students' GPA calculations according to school/college GPA rules.

GRADUATING

DECLARATION OF INTENT TO GRADUATE

When students expect to graduate, they must indicate their intent by completing the graduation application available in the MyUW Student Center. It is the policy of UW–Madison that all work for the degree must be completed and all degree requirements satisfied before the degree can be conferred.

CONFERRAL OF DEGREES

When students have been certified as having completed all university general education, degree, and major requirements, the degree will be awarded. When the degree is awarded, a diploma will be issued, listing the degree earned, and the transcript updated to reflect the degree, major, and any other approved academic programs completed. Students who have holds (https://kb.wisc.edu/helpdesk/page.php?id=4139) on their records will not receive their diplomas, or be able to order transcripts, until the holds are cleared.

COMMENCEMENT

Students who wish to attend the spring or winter commencement ceremony must indicate their intent by completing the graduation application available via Student Center in My UW (https://login.wisc.edu/idp/profile/SAML2/Redirect/SSO/?execution=e4s1) by the posted deadline (https://commencement.wisc.edu/graduate-checklist/). Students may participate in the commencement ceremony (https://commencement.wisc.edu/), in which the chancellor and deans symbolically confer the degrees, even if all degree requirements have not been completed. Neither participation in the ceremony nor listing in the program conveys degree conferral. Students will not receive the diploma or transcript notation until all degree requirements are certified as complete by their respective school or college. Should a student's graduation plans change, updates to the intended term of graduation must be indicated via the graduation application in the MyUW Student Center.