

Curriculum Rationales

The following are rationales for graduation requirements.

1. Freshman Requirements

a. Freshman Tutorial

Freshman Tutorials ensure the first-year student's participation in small group discussions that challenge him intellectually and suggest an experience characteristic of the liberal arts. Instructors select topics of critical importance to them, judged to be pertinent to student interests and concerns. The student need not have had previous experience in the particular field in order to participate. Tutorial activities develop college-level critical thinking, reading, writing, and oral expression skills. Assignments will vary with individual topics and instructors, but the goals of every tutorial remain the same: to read texts with sensitivity, to think with clarity, and to express one's thoughts with conviction and persuasion.

b. Enduring Questions

The Enduring Questions Freshman Colloquium engages the student with important questions and builds community. More specifically, the course cultivates habits of mind and intellectual skills as the student builds relationships with other students and faculty who read the "common" texts and with whom he can trade notes about the class-specific readings. The course privileges questions as the catalyst for and evidence of the liberal arts mind and regards the intellectual curiosity that provokes such questions as an important competency to be nurtured early in the student's career. The course also continues the student's development of close reading, careful thinking, and written and oral expression begun in Freshman Tutorial. This foundational course prepares the student to generate and engage effectively with discipline-specific questions later in his academic career and to consider carefully who he is and how he relates to others, both during and after his time at Wabash.

2. Language Studies

a. Proficiency in English

The requirement mandates that the student has or develops the ability to communicate effectively in writing either through [ENG-101](#) Composition taken on entry to Wabash or through demonstrated ability (i.e., on the SAT Writing Exam or an in-house diagnostic exercise). The requirement implies that writing is not just a communication tool, but a way of thinking and growing that is essential to a liberal arts education. The student is expected to hone his writing in all-college courses, in the major, and in sessions at the Writing Center.

The course in composition serves four primary goals:

- To help develop an effective process for writing successful papers
- To help develop skills as a writer and enable students to write strong papers that exhibit the following qualities:
 - A clear central thesis, logical organization, and well-substantiated ideas
 - Appropriate language and sentence structure for the intended audience
 - Correct grammar and punctuation
 - Thoughtfulness and imagination: a strong sense of engagement with the paper's topic
- To enable the writing of papers in a variety of rhetorical modes
- To develop skills as a critical reader

b. Proficiency in a Foreign Language

Language is a principal avenue for understanding and interacting with the world, its peoples, and histories. Consequently, the study of foreign languages is fundamental to a liberal arts education and a well-lived life beyond. Serious intellectual work in other languages broadens a student's communicative potential; deepens his understanding of his native tongue; refines his expressive

abilities; inculcates analytical and creative habits of mind; helps him see beyond his own place, time, and circumstance; and is foundational for his further study and appreciation of the literatures, histories, and aesthetic sensibilities of global cultures throughout time. The foreign language requirement sets the student on a path to achieve these goals while recognizing that some students bring to campus proficiency in a second language.

3. **Distribution Courses**

a. **One course credit in Language Studies**

The Wabash College Preamble and Mission Statement identify oral and written expression as learning goals. The language studies requirement ensures that the student gains experience in the explicit study of communication and language through direct and sustained instruction in the formal conventions of language use, speaking, and writing. This requirement develops a student's awareness of the power of language to shape our world. It improves his understanding of the interrelation of thinking, speaking, and writing; aids his ability to formulate, organize, and express written and spoken ideas artfully and persuasively; and immerses him in language as a discipline and object of study.

b. **Three course credits in Literature and Fine Arts**

Courses in literature and fine arts focus on the study and creation of a variety of forms of expression—literature, visual arts, music, theater, speech—as means of achieving personal and cultural understanding. Some courses develop the student's ability to respond to art and other cultural artifacts using a range of tools that include: close observation, active reading and listening, and correct and effective speech and writing. In these courses the student is introduced to aesthetic and critical theories and to the specialized vocabularies in each field. He learns to recognize and appreciate significant canonical and non-canonical works, and to grasp the importance of history and social context in artistic creation and interpretation. Other courses help the student to acquire skills fundamental to creative practice and to develop an understanding of what he wishes to express, and what might be worth expressing, artistically. These courses study creativity and how meaning—sometimes provocative or contradictory—arises out of the interaction between author or artist, artwork, and audience.

Courses in Literature and Fine Arts provide opportunity to explore imagined worlds and thus enrich the student's own. This requirement also exposes the student to representations of the diverse lives of others, past and present, and to the ways humans interact practically and imaginatively with their environments. Literature courses in foreign languages offer another potent avenue into the minds of other people through direct engagement with languages other than English. In these ways literature and fine arts can be seen not just as pleasurable, which they are, but as essential components of human life.

c. **Three course credits in Behavioral Science**

The behavioral sciences endeavor to provide students with a better understanding of human thought and action. A student of the human sciences learns to subject human behavior to systematic analysis, empirical scrutiny, and reasoned interpretation, providing him with a better understanding of himself and his surroundings. The student learns about the theoretical frameworks that describe how people interact with each other and with social institutions, the methods of empirical testing by which these frameworks are derived, and the relationship between scientific knowledge and social policy.

d. **Two course credits in Laboratory Science**

As an essential component of liberal arts education, coursework in the natural sciences engages the student in the theoretical and quantitative understanding of scientific knowledge as well as a critical evaluation of the evidence upon which it stands. The student participates regularly in significant learning experiences in the classroom, laboratory, and field to develop skills in the areas of critical observation, sound experimentation, and data analysis. These endeavors provide insight into the behavior of the natural world and engage students in problem-solving.

e. **Two course credits in Quantitative Literacy**

The Quantitative Literacy requirement complements other distribution area requirements by ensuring participation in courses that provide a broad exposure to problem-solving through the

application of mathematical models, the development of basic quantitative intuition, and the ability to represent and interpret quantitative information. Courses in this category come from a variety of disciplines, but share the common goal of further developing basic quantitative reasoning ability, and the ability to understand, construct and critique arguments founded on quantitative information. Courses used to meet the Quantitative Skills requirement will not count toward other distribution course requirements.

f. **Two course credits in History, Philosophy, or Religion; Education 201 may also be used to fulfill this requirement.**

Courses in History, Philosophy, and Religion engage narratives and questions about human experience and beliefs. The student learns to appreciate a diversity of perspectives and points of view in cultural context, across cultures, through time, or even within a particular position. Through such courses the student engages in philosophical reflection, seeks meaningful truths, learns to identify universal patterns and connections, and grapples with the complexities of human ideas and experiences as well as change over time. Each of these disciplines introduces the student to various methods of inquiry and analysis along with intentional critical reflection on the scope and limits of these methods.

4. **Major**

A major consists of a program of study defined by one or more academic departments or a committee of the faculty. The major may require up to 9 course credits and may additionally require co-requisite courses in allied fields. Standing majors are approved by the Academic Policy Committee, the Faculty, and the Board of Trustees, and the requirements are published in the Academic Bulletin. A student may also propose a self-designed Humanities and Fine Arts major in consultation with a supervising faculty committee appointed by the Division II chair. A student will normally declare his major during the second semester of his sophomore year, but he may make changes by advising the Registrar's Office as late as mid-semester of the fall semester of his senior year. Changes after that time may be made only by petition to the Curriculum Appeals Committee.

5. **Minor**

A minor consists of a program of study defined by one or more academic departments or a committee of the faculty. The minor may require 5 to 8 course credits and may additionally require co-requisite courses in allied fields. Standing minors are approved by the Academic Policy Committee, the Faculty, and the Board of Trustees, and the requirements are published in the Academic Bulletin. A student may propose a self-designed minor in consultation with his advisor and a supervising faculty committee. Programs of study for self-designed minors must be approved by the Academic Policy Committee. A student will normally declare his minor during the second semester of his sophomore year, but he may make changes by advising the Registrar's Office as late as mid-semester of the fall semester of his senior year. Changes after that time may be made only by petition to the Curriculum Appeals Committee.

6. **Minimum of 34 course credits and a 2.00 GPA**

For graduation, students must pass a minimum of 34 course credits and earn at least a 2.00 cumulative grade point average in all courses taken for grade at Wabash College, other than physical education. No more than 11 course credits having the same three letter subject designation on the transcript may be counted toward the 34 required for graduation (i.e., a student completing 12 credits with a single subject designation will be required to complete a total of 35 course credits for graduation; 13 credits in a single subject designation will require completion of 36 course credits, etc.) In foreign languages and literatures, courses numbered 101 and 102 shall not be included in the 11 course limit. At least 18 of these credits must have been successfully completed at Wabash College. With respect to this requirement, transfer credit earned in approved off-campus study or equivalency credit earned by Wabash examination will be counted as Wabash course credits (see Senior Requirements section).

7. **Comprehensive Examination**

a. Senior Written Examination

Every student must pass a written comprehensive examination in his major field.

b. Senior Oral Examination

Every student must pass the senior oral examination. The examination committee will consist of one instructor from his major department, one from his minor department or area of concentration, and

one from neither. The examination will be no more than one hour in length and must be passed by the mid-semester of the second semester of the senior year.

A student who fails his comprehensive examination may retake the failed work once in the spring term. Should he fail in that effort, he may retake the comprehensive exam once in each subsequent academic year at the time of the regularly scheduled comprehensive exam. If a student fails the College-wide oral examination but passes the departmental examination, then he is required to retake only the College-wide oral examination, and vice versa. Departments will make and evaluate all departmental examinations. A student retaking an exam cannot receive a final grade higher than pass.