

# The Curriculum

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BOWDOIN STUDENTS must design an education in the context of their own developing goals and aspirations and in relation to the College's vision of a liberal education, its distribution requirements, and the requirements of a major field of study. The distribution requirements encourage exploration and broaden students' capacities to view and interpret the world from a variety of perspectives; the major program challenges students to develop a deeper understanding and self-assurance as independent and creative contributors to an area of study. Throughout their four years, students build intellectual capabilities, self-confidence as independent thinkers and problem-solvers, and come to know the pleasures of discovering and developing proficiencies in new areas of knowledge. A liberal education founded in both breadth and depth teaches students how to continue learning as the world changes and demands new perspectives, knowledge, and skills.

The College's curriculum introduces students to academic disciplines that bring conceptual and methodological traditions to bear in teaching disciplined inquiry, analysis, argument, and understanding. Students choose a major, using the departmental or interdisciplinary approaches available at Bowdoin, as a way to engage a discipline in depth. Furthermore, they must distribute their courses across the curriculum in order to broaden awareness of the varying ways that academic fields make sense of the world.

Bowdoin offers a course of study leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts. The College requires students to seek breadth in their education through a modest set of distribution and division requirements that stimulate students to explore the curriculum more widely on their own. To graduate, a student must also complete an approved major.

Designing an education is an education in itself. The most fulfilling liberal arts education cannot be fully planned before the first day of class because such mapping would not permit the many new paths for exploration that students discover as they learn about unfamiliar fields, find exciting questions and ideas, and uncover unanticipated interests and talents. Nor can a challenging education emerge if a student selects courses one by one each semester; a liberal education is much more than the sum of thirty-two credits. Bowdoin College permits a wide set of choices to enable students to broaden their views of the world and of their own talents and interests, and to deepen their knowledge and capacities. Designing an education thus requires self-examination, careful thought, substantial flexibility, some intellectual daring, and the wise counsel of academic advisors.

A vital part of the educational experience takes place in the interaction between students and their academic advisors. Each student is assigned a pre-major academic advisor at the start of the first year. The pre-major academic advising system is intended to help students take full advantage of the first two years of Bowdoin and begin to plan the remaining years. It provides a framework within which a student can work with a faculty member to make informed academic decisions. Such a partnership is particularly important during the period of transition and adjustment that typically takes place during the first year in college. Academic advisors may make recommendations about courses, combinations of courses, or direct students towards other resources of the College. They may also play a role at moments of academic difficulty. The effectiveness of the system depends on the commitment of the student and the advisor. Students must declare their majors by early in the fourth semester of their college enrollment and afterwards are advised by members of their major departments.

## ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

All students prior to the Class of 2010 should consult the 2005–2006 Catalogue or the Office of the Registrar for information about their academic requirements for the degree. Information is also available at [www.bowdoin.edu/registrar](http://www.bowdoin.edu/registrar), and personalized information for students is available on the student information Web site at [www.bowdoin.edu/registrar/bearings](http://www.bowdoin.edu/registrar/bearings).

To qualify for the bachelor of arts degree, a student must have:

Successfully passed thirty-two full-credit courses or the equivalent;

Spent four semesters (successfully passed sixteen credits) in residence, at least two semesters of which have been during the junior and senior years;

By the end of the second semester in college, completed a first-year seminar;

Completed at least one course in each of the following five distribution areas—mathematical, computational, or statistical reasoning; inquiry in the natural sciences; exploring social differences; international perspectives; and visual and performing arts; these should normally be completed by the end of the fourth semester in college;

Completed at least one course in each of the following three divisions of the curriculum—natural science and mathematics, social and behavioral sciences, and humanities (in addition to the required course in the visual and performing arts); and

Completed an approved major.

No student will ordinarily be permitted to remain at Bowdoin for more than nine semesters of full-time work.

## DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS

Students must take at least one course in each of the following five distribution areas:

**Mathematical, Computational, or Statistical Reasoning.** These courses enable students to use mathematics and quantitative models and techniques to understand the world around them either by learning the general tools of mathematics and statistics or by applying them in a subject area. (Designated by **MCSR** following a course number in the course descriptions.)

**Inquiry in the Natural Sciences.** These courses help students expand their scientific literacy through an acquaintance with the natural sciences and with the types of inquiry in those disciplines, developed by engagement in active and rigorous study of scientific problems. (Designated by **INS** following a course number in the course descriptions.)

**Exploring Social Differences.** These courses develop awareness, understanding, and skills of analysis for examining differences such as those in class, environmental resources, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation across and within societies and the ways that these are reflected in and shaped by historical, cultural, social, political, and economic processes. (Designated by **ESD** following a course number in the course descriptions.)

**International Perspectives.** These courses assist students in gaining a critical understanding of the world outside the United States, both contemporary and historical. (Designated by **IP** following a course number in the course descriptions.)

**Visual and Performing Arts.** These courses help students expand their understanding of artistic expression and judgment through creation, performance and analysis of artistic work in the areas of dance, film, music, theater, and visual art. (Designated by **VPA** following a course number in the course descriptions.)

First-year seminars, independent study courses, and honors projects do not fulfill any of the five Distribution Requirements. Further, these requirements may not be met by Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate credits, and may only be satisfied with courses taken at Bowdoin. These requirements should be completed by the end of the student's fourth semester in college. A course will be counted as meeting a Distribution Requirement if a student earns a grade of D or better; courses will not be counted if they are taken on a nongraded (Credit/D/Fail) basis. Students may not count the same course toward more than one Distribution Requirement.

Also note that the requirement of completing a first-year seminar will not be met if the seminar is taken on a nongraded (Credit/D/Fail) basis.

### DIVISION REQUIREMENTS

Students must take at least one course from each of the following three divisions of the curriculum.

*Natural Science and Mathematics:* Designated by the letter **a** following a course number in the course descriptions.

*Social and Behavioral Sciences:* Designated by the letter **b** following a course number in the course descriptions.

*Humanities (in addition to the required course on the Visual and Performing Arts):* Designated by the letter **c** following a course number in the course descriptions.

Like the Distribution Requirements, Division Requirements may not be met by Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate credits, and may only be satisfied with courses taken at Bowdoin. A course will be counted as meeting a Division Requirement if a student earns a grade of D or better; courses will not be counted if they are taken on a nongraded (Credit/D/Fail) basis.

### THE MAJOR PROGRAM

Students may choose one of six basic patterns to satisfy the major requirement at Bowdoin: a departmental major, two departmental majors (a double major), a coordinate major, an interdisciplinary major, a student-designed major, or any of the preceding with a departmental minor. The requirements for completing specific majors and minors are presented in detail in the section describing the courses offered by each department, beginning on page 52. Interdisciplinary majors are described beginning on page 203.

Students should have ample time to be exposed to a broad range of courses and experiences before focusing their educational interests and so do not declare their majors until the fourth semester of their college enrollment. Students are required to declare their majors before registering for courses for the junior year or applying to participate in off-campus study programs. Students declare their majors only after consultation with a major academic advisor(s). Since some departments have courses that must be passed or criteria that must be met before a student will be accepted as a major, students are encouraged to think well in advance about possible majors and to speak with faculty about their educational interests. Students may change their majors after consultation with the relevant departments, but they may not declare a new major after the first semester of the senior year. Special procedures exist for interdisciplinary and student-designed majors. These are described below.

### Departmental and Program Majors

Departmental and program majors are offered in the following areas:

Africana Studies	German
Anthropology	Government and Legal Studies
Art History	History
Asian Studies	Latin American Studies
Biochemistry	Mathematics
Biology	Music
Chemistry	Neuroscience
Classical Archaeology	Philosophy
Classical Studies	Physics
Classics	Psychology
Computer Science	Religion
Economics	Romance Languages
English	Russian
French	Sociology
Gender and Women's Studies	Spanish
Geology	Visual Arts

A student may choose to satisfy the requirements of one department or program (single major) or to satisfy all of the requirements set by two departments (double major). A student who chooses a double major may drop one major at any time.

### Coordinate Major

The coordinate major encourages specialization in an area of learning within the framework of a recognized academic discipline. The coordinate major is offered only in relation to the Environmental Studies Program. For a specific description of this major, see pages 132–33.

### Interdisciplinary Major

Interdisciplinary majors are designed to tie together the offerings and major requirements of two separate departments by focusing on a theme that integrates the two areas. Such majors usually fulfill most or all of the requirements of two separate departments and usually entail a special project to achieve a synthesis of the disciplines involved.

Anticipating that many students will be interested in certain patterns of interdisciplinary studies, several departments have specified standard requirements for interdisciplinary majors. These are:

- Art History and Archaeology
- Art History and Visual Arts
- Chemical Physics
- Computer Science and Mathematics
- English and Theater
- Eurasian and East European Studies
- Geology and Chemistry
- Geology and Physics
- Mathematics and Economics

For complete descriptions of these interdisciplinary majors, see pages 203–07.

A student may take the initiative to develop an interdisciplinary major not specified in the Catalogue by consulting with the chairs of the two major departments. Students who do so must have their program approved by the Curriculum Implementation Committee. Students must submit their proposals to the Curriculum Implementation Committee by December 1 of their sophomore year. A student may not select an interdisciplinary major after the junior year.

### **Student-Designed Major**

Some students may wish to pursue a major program that does not fit the pattern of a departmental major, a coordinate major, or an interdisciplinary major. In such cases, a student may work with two faculty members to develop a major program that demonstrates significant strength in at least two departments. Such strength is to be shown in both the number and pattern of courses involved. A synthesizing project is required. Guidelines for the development of student-designed majors are available from the Office of the Registrar. Student-designed majors require the approval of the Recording Committee. Students must submit their proposals to the Recording Committee by December 1 of their sophomore year.

### **The Minor**

Most departments and programs offer one or more minor programs consisting of no fewer than four courses and no more than seven courses, including all prerequisites. A minor program must be planned with and approved by both the student's major and minor departments no later than the end of the first semester of the senior year. A minor may be dropped at any time.

The following departments and programs offer a minor:

Africana Studies	Geology
Anthropology	German
Asian Studies	Government and Legal Studies
Art (Art History or Visual Arts)	History
Biology	Latin American Studies
Chemistry	Mathematics
Classics (Greek, Latin, Classics, Archaeology, or Classical Studies)	Music
Computer Science	Philosophy
Dance*	Physics
Economics	Psychology
Education* (Education Studies or Teaching)	Religion
English	Romance Languages (French, Italian, or Spanish)
Environmental Studies	Russian
Film Studies*	Sociology
Gay and Lesbian Studies*	Theater*
Gender and Women's Studies	

\* *These programs offer only a minor.*