UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AT GW

An undergraduate education at GW provides students with a wide range of opportunities to pursue both professional and liberal arts degrees. These degrees ensure that students leave the University with a body of knowledge that shows a depth of understanding in at least one field. In addition, the General Education Requirement that is common to the education of students in all schools of the University, ensure that students develop key analytical abilities that transcend disciplinary boundaries. These analytical abilities provide students with cornerstones for their personal development, civic consciousness, and successful careers.

To earn an undergraduate degree, students must:

- Complete at least 120 credits,
- Fulfill the University General Education Requirement (Tier One),
- Fulfill school-specific general education and distribution requirements (Tier Two), and
- Fulfill the requirements of at least one major in their home school (Tier Three).

Tier One: General Education Requirements

All undergraduate students at GW are required to fulfill Tier One of the University’s General Education Requirement. The General Education curriculum trains students to engage in active intellectual inquiry across a variety of disciplines by developing a range of analytical skills, including critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and scientific reasoning.

- **Critical thinking in the social sciences and in the humanities** refers to the analysis and evaluation of complex information (systems of theory or thought) as well as the formulation of logical arguments based on that analysis.
- **Quantitative reasoning** refers to the process of modeling problems of the real world within a formal abstract system, solving those problems using systematic numerical methods of analysis, and interpreting the results.
- **Scientific reasoning** refers to consistent, logical thought patterns that are employed during the process of scientific inquiry that enables individuals to propose relationships between observed phenomena, design experiments to assess the validity of these relationships, and evaluate the results of these experiments, all using the tools, skills, and techniques of quantitative reasoning.

In addition to these elements of inquiry, students are trained to communicate effectively in both written and oral formats, not only in their general education course sequence, but in their majors.

- The **written communication** requirement trains students in the effective use of language to express critical thinking that evaluates rhetorical situations, identifies significant lines of inquiry, investigates and analyzes available knowledge, and develops rigorous arguments appropriate to the intended audience.
- The **oral communication** requirement trains students in the effective interpretation, composition, and presentation of information, ideas, and values to a specific audience.

Only those courses that are designed specifically to meet the objectives outlined above, and that are assessed for their outcomes in these areas, count for general education credit. See the CCAS Academic Advising website (https://advising.columbian.gwu.edu/general-education-courses/) for lists of courses.

While students learn these analytical and communicative skills in a range of disciplines, not all courses in each discipline are designed to teach these skills. Many courses are focused more on content or on other intellectual goals. It is expected that students will not only learn these skills in their general education courses, but also will employ them in their pursuit of their majors and, when they leave the University, their pursuit of their professions and participation in the world around them.

All students are required to take five Tier One courses (for a total of 15 to 16 credits) in a range of disciplines drawn from the social sciences, humanities, natural or physical sciences with a laboratory component, and mathematics or statistics.

- In some cases, these courses may be used to satisfy school-specific requirements and/or major requirements. Students should check with their schools and/or departments to determine which courses may be double counted.
- Students who are contemplating transferring from one school to another should carefully consult the Tier One requirements for the school of origin and the school of transfer to ensure that the general education courses selected for one school also count for the other school.

For their writing requirement, all students are required to take three courses: UW 1020 University Writing and two Writing in the Disciplines (WID) courses. WID courses are designated with a ‘W’ appended to the course number. WID courses may also fulfill general education, distribution, school-specific, or major requirements, if the courses are designated for that purpose. Students should check with their schools and/or departments to determine which courses may be double counted.

Tier Two: School-Specific General Education and Distribution Requirements

In each school, students must fulfill additional general education or distribution requirements. These Tier Two requirements differ by school. Columbian College of Arts and Sciences (CCAS) provides a liberal arts education, and as such, requires additional general education courses that lead students to deepen the skills developed in Tier One courses. GW School of Business (GWSSB), the Elliott School of International Affairs (ESIA), and School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) are professional schools. As such,
they require different courses in Tier Two from those of a general liberal arts education, focusing their requirements on courses appropriate to the professional development of their students as outlined in Tier Three. The Milken Institute School of Public Health (GWSPH) is a hybrid school, offering both liberal arts and professional majors. As a result, GWSPH has limited Tier Two courses and, instead, differentiates additional requirements at the major-level (Tier Three).

**CCAS** requires additional general education courses at the Tier-Two level. Students continue to develop their skills in critical thinking as well as quantitative and scientific reasoning. They also continue to develop skills in written communication and incorporate global and cross-cultural perspectives as well as civic engagement into some of their learning. Students take approximately 9 to 18 credits to satisfy remaining General Education Requirement in a variety of disciplines and with respect to global perspectives, civic engagement, and oral communication. The courses that satisfy this requirement can be found here ([https://advising.columbian.gwu.edu/general-education-courses/](https://advising.columbian.gwu.edu/general-education-courses/)).

**GWSB** requires that all students complete the Four Year Development Program, which consists of taking BADM 1001 First-Year Development Course I, BADM 1002 First-Year Development Course II, BADM 3001 Career Management Strategy, and BADM 4001 Leadership and Career Launch.

**ESIA** requires a minimum of 19 credits at the Tier-Two level. These credits are included within the school’s introduction to the major requirement. These courses, which are required for students in all five of ESIA’s undergraduate programs, ensure that students are provided with foundational training in disciplines central to international affairs, including economics, history, political science, and anthropology or geography, introduction to the major requirements also include the Elliott School’s signature course, IAFF 1001 First-Year Experience.

ESIA also requires all students to fulfill 25 to 26 credits in the school’s supporting courses in the liberal arts requirement. Many course options that fulfill these credits can be applied simultaneously to University-wide Tier One requirements, but technically are unique requirements within ESIA.

Specific information regarding introduction to the major and supporting courses in the liberal arts requirement can be found here ([https://bulletin.gwu.edu/international-affairs/undergraduate-programs/ba-international-affairs/#generalrequirementstext](https://bulletin.gwu.edu/international-affairs/undergraduate-programs/ba-international-affairs/#generalrequirementstext)). Students should consult their program’s major requirements page here ([http://bulletin.gwu.edu/international-affairs/#undergraduatetext](http://bulletin.gwu.edu/international-affairs/#undergraduatetext)) for information about program-specific foreign language requirements

**SEAS** requires the course SEAS 1001 (Engineering Orientation) as well as three additional social science and humanities courses at the Tier-Two level to provide intellectual breadth for students. The courses that satisfy this distribution requirement can be found here ([http://bulletin.gwu.edu/engineering-applied-science/#Humanities](http://bulletin.gwu.edu/engineering-applied-science/#Humanities)). Students are also required to take two additional mathematics courses and two additional science courses to provide adequate grounding for their engineering and computer science training. Depending on the major, bachelor of science (BS) students have additional requirements in mathematics and science.

**GWSPH** requires all students to take PUBH 1101 Introduction to Public Health and Health Services.

### Tier Three: Major Requirements for the Degree

Each school requires students to take the required courses for a major.

**CCAS**: Students are required to select a major and to successfully complete the courses needed to fulfill degree requirements for that major. BS and BA requirements vary by major. Information about program-specific Tier Three requirements can be found by visiting individual program major requirements pages here ([http://bulletin.gwu.edu/business/#undergraduatetext](http://bulletin.gwu.edu/business/#undergraduatetext)).

**GWSB**: Students are required to select a major and to successfully complete courses needed to fulfill degree requirements for that major. Information about program-specific Tier Three requirements can be found by visiting individual program major requirements pages here ([http://bulletin.gwu.edu/business/#undergraduatetext](http://bulletin.gwu.edu/business/#undergraduatetext)).

**ESIA**: All ESIA students must demonstrate third-year proficiency in a foreign language and to take school-specific regional foundations courses to develop an understanding of diverse international cultures. The specific means of fulfilling language and regional foundations requirements differ across regional and non-regional programs (e.g., BA and BS in International Affairs students need to fulfill ESIA advanced fundamentals requirements while others do not). All students are required to select a major and to successfully complete the courses needed to fulfill degree requirements for that major. The Elliott School’s BS degree, as opposed to its BA degrees, generally requires completion of an additional 18 credits in approved upper-level (2000-level or above) STEM coursework. Information about program-specific Tier Three requirements can be found by visiting individual program major requirements pages here ([http://bulletin.gwu.edu/international-affairs/undergraduate-programs/](http://bulletin.gwu.edu/international-affairs/undergraduate-programs/)).

**SEAS**: Students are required to select a major and to successfully complete courses needed to fulfill degree requirement for that major. All students are required to complete a capstone project. Information about program-specific Tier Three requirements and recommended program of study for each major can be found by visiting individual program major requirements pages here ([http://bulletin.gwu.edu/engineering-applied-science/#undergraduatetext](http://bulletin.gwu.edu/engineering-applied-science/#undergraduatetext)).
GWSPH: Students are required to select a major and to successfully complete the courses needed to fulfill degree requirements for that major. Exercise science students also have the option to select a concentration. Requirements differ across majors and concentrations. In addition, students may have non-GWSPH prerequisites attached to courses required for their major or concentration. Information about program-specific Tier Three requirements can be found on individual program major requirements pages here (http://bulletin.gwu.edu/public-health/#undergraduatetext).