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 ensures 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.

The University General Education Requirement is applicable to the following schools: Columbian College of Arts and Sciences (CCAS), GW School of Business (GWSB), Elliott School of International Affairs (ESIA), School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS), and Milken Institute School of Public Health (GWSPH). The School of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Nursing, and College of Professional Studies offer degree completion programs at the undergraduate level and students are expected to have completed the University General Education Requirement prior to enrolling at GW.

To earn an undergraduate degree, students must:

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

Tier One: University General Education Requirement

All undergraduate students at GW are required to fulfill Tier One of the University General Education Requirement. The University 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, and proficiency in written and oral communication. Students are expected to use these skills in pursuit of their major and, upon graduation from the University, in pursuit of their profession and participation in the world around them. Only those courses that are designed specifically to meet the objectives outlined below, and that are assessed for their outcomes in these areas, count for University General Education credit.

To fulfill Tier One requirements, students must successfully complete the following:

- One course in quantitative reasoning (must be in mathematics or statistics)
- One course in scientific reasoning (must be in natural and/or physical laboratory sciences)
- Two courses in critical thinking in the social sciences
- One course in critical thinking in the humanities
- First-Year Writing (UW 1020)
- Two writing intensive courses after successful completion of UW 1020. Courses that fulfill this requirement are categorized as Writing in the Disciplines (WID) courses.
- One course that has an approved oral communication component
- 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. Students are required to take one approved course in mathematics or statistics.
- 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. Students are required to take one approved course in natural and/or physical laboratory sciences that includes a laboratory component.
- Critical thinking 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. Students are required to take one approved course in critical thinking in the humanities and two approved courses in critical thinking in the social sciences.

In addition to these elements of inquiry, students are trained to communicate effectively in both written and oral formats, not only in their University General Education course requirement, but in their majors.

- Students are trained to communicate effectively in written formats through a first-year writing course, UW 1020 University Writing, and subsequent Writing in the Disciplines (WID) courses. 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. Students must complete at least 10 credits in courses to fulfill the written communication requirement, including 4 credits in UW 1020 and at least 6 credits in a combination of Writing in the Disciplines (WID) courses. WID courses are designated in the curriculum
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 consult with their school and/or department to determine which courses may be double counted.

- The oral communication requirement trains students in the effective interpretation, composition, and presentation of information, ideas, and values to specific audiences. Students are required to take one course that has an approved oral communication component.

Students are expected not only to learn these skills in their University General Education courses, but also to 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.

In some cases, University General Education courses may be used to satisfy school-specific requirements and/or major requirements. Students should consult 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 review the Tier One requirements for the school of origin and the school of transfer to ensure that the University General Education courses selected for one school also count for the other school.

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. 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 University General Education credit. A complete list of approved University General Education courses (https://advising.columbian.gwu.edu/general-education-curriculum-gpac/#general-gw-requirements) can be found on the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences Undergraduate Academic Advising website. Approved courses are subject to change during the academic year.

**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 (https://advising.columbian.gwu.edu/general-education-curriculum-gpac/#ccas-specific-gpac) provides a liberal arts education, and as such, requires additional, school-specific general education courses that lead students to deepen the skills developed in Tier One courses. The GW School of Business (https://business.gwu.edu/current-students/undergraduate/advising-center/), Elliott School of International Affairs (https://elliott.gwu.edu/undergraduate-academic-advising/), and School of Engineering and Applied Science (https://www.seas.gwu.edu/undergraduate-students-services-advising/) are professional schools and as such, they require different courses in Tier Two than those of a general liberal arts education, focusing on courses appropriate to the professional development of their students as outlined in Tier Three. The Milken Institute School of Public Health (https://publichealth.gwu.edu/academics/undergraduate-advising/) (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 Tier Three level.

**Tier Three: Major Requirements for the Degree**

Major requirements differ by school:

- **CCAS:** Students in the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences must select a major and successfully complete the courses needed to fulfill degree requirements for that major. Bachelor of arts and bachelor of science requirements vary by major. Information about program-specific Tier Three requirements can be found in the CCAS section of this Bulletin (http://bulletin.gwu.edu/arts-sciences/).

- **GWSB:** Students in the GW School of Business must select a major and successfully complete courses needed to fulfill degree requirements for that major. Information about program-specific Tier Three requirements can be found in the GWSB section of this Bulletin (http://bulletin.gwu.edu/business/).

- **ESIA:** Students in the Elliott School of International Affairs must demonstrate third-year proficiency in a foreign language and 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. Information about program-specific Tier Three requirements can be found in the ESIA section of this Bulletin (http://bulletin.gwu.edu/international-affairs/).

- **SEAS:** Students in the School of Engineering and Applied Science must select a major and successfully complete courses needed to fulfill degree requirements 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 in the SEAS section of this Bulletin (http://bulletin.gwu.edu/engineering-applied-science/).

- **GWSPH:** Students in the GW Milken Institute School of Public Health must select a major and 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 in the GWSPH
section of this Bulletin (http://bulletin.gwu.edu/public-health/).