

CURRICULUM

The Purpose of the Curriculum

A curriculum is often identified with a set of degree requirements: “What do I have to do to receive my degree?” But degree requirements are not themselves sufficient to define appropriate educational goals. One might fulfill all of the College’s degree requirements and yet fail to get a good education. It would also be possible to acquire a good education but neglect to fulfill the degree requirements. Now, we certainly do want you to fulfill all of the degree requirements, and we will work with you to see that this happens. But you are not here fundamentally for the purpose of completing degree requirements. If you think of your education solely in those terms, the result will be dull and unsatisfying.

“Curriculum” comes from the Latin for “course,” in the sense in which one might speak of the course of a journey. The term denotes a means rather than an end, but it suggests better than “degree requirements” what it is to become educated. It denotes a movement from a starting point to a destination, a movement that proceeds along some path. You are not left to your own devices to figure out how to get from here to there. But neither is the path straight and narrow. You will have many choices to make as you negotiate the course of your education, but they will be informed by the experience of the faculty, who in the curriculum offer their considered advice for your educational journey.

The College’s curriculum draws you toward two distinctive goals: toward general education across the wide range of the arts and sciences and toward specialized education in a major. A commitment to holding these two—general and specialized education—together has been the genius of American higher education since the early part of the last century. We continue to believe that these two elements constitute an education best suited to enabling intelligent individuals to live humane, productive and fulfilling lives in the 21st century.

There are 3 benchmarks that every College student must meet to graduate:

1. Requirements:

Complete:

A. General Education Requirements (<https://www.college.upenn.edu/gen-ed/>) (Foundational Approaches and Sectors)

B. Major (<https://upenn-preview.courseleaf.com/undergraduate/arts-sciences/curriculum/major/>)

2. Total courses:

Complete the course units (c.u.) needed to earn the degree (32-36 c.u.), typically 20 courses outside the major, but no student is required to complete more than 36 courses. Please visit the individual major pages in the Catalog about the specific c.u. requirements by Major (<https://upenn-preview.courseleaf.com/undergraduate/arts-sciences/curriculum/major/>).

3. 16 courses in the Arts & Sciences outside the major:

Complete 16 c.u. in the Arts & Sciences outside of the primary major which include those courses used for general education requirements, minors, and second majors. Courses in Wharton, Nursing, Engineering (including CIS), and Design (FNAR, DSGN, ARCH) are not Arts & Sciences courses, and therefore do not count towards this 16 c.u. requirement. However, some DSGN, FNAR, CIS, NETS or STAT can be used for General

Education Requirements. When that occurs, these courses can be counted toward the 16 A&S courses outside the major. Students who are pursuing dual degrees are required to complete 14 A&S courses outside of the primary Arts & Sciences major.