Multidisciplinary Academic Programs

To enrich the curricular opportunities available to students and faculty, the Yale College Faculty authorized a framework for multidisciplinary academic programs in Yale College. These programs provide opportunities for Yale College students to examine pressing social challenges from a variety of disciplinary perspectives among a community of students and faculty who have shared interests. Students from any major can apply to these programs, and faculty from across the university participate in them. Each program focuses centrally on a distinct and different set of issues, but they all share common features, including a core curriculum—beginning with a gateway course and culminating in a senior capstone project—and opportunities for practical experience that allow students to combine theory and practice, applying what they have learned in the classroom and in their research. Education Studies, Energy Studies, Global Health Studies, and Human Rights are among current multidisciplinary academic programs offered in Yale College.

The Committee on Majors uses the following guidelines for the consideration of proposals for new multidisciplinary academic programs in Yale College:

- All such new programs shall be vetted by the Committee on Majors before being presented to the Yale College Faculty for consideration. Evidence of faculty interest and commitment to a proposed program shall be a necessary precondition for such consideration.
- The Provost’s Office shall present to the Committee on Majors its assessment of the economic viability of such proposals. All multidisciplinary academic programs should be revenue-neutral or bring their own resources; the expenses of such programs include funding for staff support, salary for outside faculty as needed, and making affordable the costs associated with summer or school-year cocurricular opportunities.
- There is a presumption that no multidisciplinary academic program will become a permanent feature of the Yale College curriculum, but that each requires periodic review and reapproval to continue. Once a program is approved for an initial set period (usually five years), a faculty-led steering group for the program shall regularly review the requirements and evaluate the commitment of instructors, mentors, and advisers to the program. Further review shall be conducted by the Committee on Majors in the penultimate year of the term for which such programs may be initially approved.
- A program director, generally a person with a faculty appointment, shall be appointed by the Dean of Yale College to coordinate advising and mentoring of students admitted to the program and to oversee the curriculum and any cocurricular requirements, such as internships.
- Admission shall be limited to the number of students that can be supported by faculty resources and by the availability of required summer or term-time cocurricular opportunities.
- Multidisciplinary academic programs shall normally require a minimum of four and a maximum of six course credits for completion. Exceptions to these limits can, however, be permitted when the Committee on Majors deems them justified by the mission of the program or by the availability of resources.
- Each multidisciplinary program shall normally be responsible for creating and staffing its own gateway and final courses. The final course may take the form of a group project or of individual projects, but in no case shall its work be substantially the same as the senior project of a student’s major.
- If there are prerequisite courses, those prerequisites should be available to a reasonable number of students on a regular basis.
- A defined cluster of courses drawn from a range of existing majors might form the core of the program. The roster of approved courses should be comprehensive and adaptable enough to withstand some change over time.
- An experience (such as community service, an internship, field work, or research, as relevant) outside the Yale College classroom, offered over the summer or during term time, shall be included in the program. In accordance with Yale College policy, no course credit shall be given for such experiences unless they also entail a program of regular course work.
- No more than two course credits shall normally be allowed to count toward completion of both the student’s major and a multidisciplinary academic program.

Some details may vary from program to program, as appropriate.

For purposes of consistent and reliable recordkeeping, the University Registrar’s Office is the official repository of information about who has been admitted to and who has completed such multidisciplinary programs.