

COMMITTEE ON MAJORS

The Committee on Majors was created in 2000 to oversee major programs in Yale College. Periodically, the DUS in each department will be asked to present to the Committee on Majors an overview of the undergraduate program in that major. This process of review, assigned to the Committee on Majors by the faculty in December 2000, was begun by the Course of Study Committee in 1974–1975 with a threefold objective. First, the committee hopes to gain a broader perspective on all programs and majors so that it can better understand how each one seeks to meet the educational objectives of undergraduates both within and outside the major. Second, the committee wishes to gain some sense of how the departments distribute their instructional and advising resources. Third, the reviews are designed to spur each department and program into reflection and self-analysis and to provide a forum in which its DUS and its chair can discuss with the committee and the dean of Yale College the particular needs, problems, and goals of its undergraduate curriculum.

Samples of memos to directors of undergraduate studies and to student participants regarding departmental review of undergraduate programs, explaining the process of periodic review and indicating the basic questions the committee wishes to see addressed by each department and program, are available in PDF format in the Appendix section.

Presenting such a report may seem at first glance to be a large undertaking, but it occurs infrequently and might well be regarded as an opportunity rather than a burden. The format of the presentation is quite flexible. Ordinarily, the DUS prepares a short written response to the questions in the memo, and then attends one of the regular meetings of the Committee on Majors in order to explain the program in more detail and answer questions that members of the committee may still have. Frequently the chair of the department also attends the meeting. Undergraduate students who are majoring in the department are polled, and a small number are invited to meet with the committee separately. The chair and the secretary of the Committee on Majors always stand ready to help a director of undergraduate studies prepare a presentation. So far these periodic reviews have proved interesting and rewarding both to the committee and to the directors of undergraduate studies. For 2017–2018, the secretary of the Committee on Majors is Nilakshi Parndigamage (nilakshi.parndigamage@yale.edu). (jessie.hill@yale.edu)