SPECIAL ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

To enrich the curricular opportunities available to students and faculty, the Yale College Faculty authorized a framework for special academic programs in Yale College. Each program approved under this arrangement will enable a cohort of selected undergraduates to undertake coordinated course work and extracurricular activity in a field or discipline not already covered by an existing major. These programs are distinct from majors in that they do not purport to provide the same depth of concentration in a field of study; they are also distinct from minors, in that they are not reduced versions of existing majors. Many of these special academic programs culminate in a workshop course that requires students to use cross-disciplinary methods and materials to focus on finding solutions to problems of interest to contemporary scholars or social leaders. Some emphasize the development of a set of skills complementary to or extending the skills students acquire in their major or through satisfying the distributional requirements in expository writing, languages, and quantitative reasoning. Education Studies (http://yalecollege.yale.edu/academics/special-academic-programs/education-studies), Energy Studies (http://climate.yale.edu/prog-init/energy-studies), Global Health (http://ghi.yale.edu/gh-fellows), Human Rights (http://humanrights.yale.edu), and Journalism (http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/journalism-initiative) are among current special academic programs offered in Yale College.

The Committee on Majors uses the following guidelines for the consideration of proposals for new special 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 special 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 special 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.
- Special academic programs shall normally require a minimum of three 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 special 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 special 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 special programs. There will be no entry on the transcript concerning these special academic programs, but the director of each program shall provide for the student’s file in his or her residential college dean’s office an official letter attesting to the student’s successful completion of one of these programs.

In accordance with the plan presented to the faculty, no more than five such new programs should be created in the five-year period beginning July 1, 2013, after which a comprehensive review of the value and the costs of such programs should be presented to the Yale College Faculty.