SKILLS REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the area requirements, Yale’s distributional requirements stipulate course credits in each of three skills: writing, quantitative reasoning, and foreign language. A brief description of each of these categories follows.

WRITING

The ability to write well is one of the hallmarks of a liberal arts education and is indispensable to advanced research in most disciplines. As students strengthen their writing skills, they develop intellectual practices that distinguish active from passive learners.

The English department in particular offers many courses that focus on writing clearly and cogently, and courses in other departments stress writing skills within the context of their disciplines. Over 450 courses, spanning approximately 50 different academic programs, give special attention to writing. Such courses, designated WR, do not necessarily require more writing than other courses; rather, they provide more help with writing assignments. Some characteristics of WR courses include writing to discover ideas, learning from model essays, detailed feedback, and reviewing writing in small groups. Note that credit toward the writing requirement cannot be earned in courses in creative writing (specifically poetry, fiction, and playwriting), nor in courses conducted in a language other than English.

QUANTITATIVE REASONING

The mental rigor resulting from quantitative study has been celebrated since ancient times, and applications of quantitative methods have proven critical to many different disciplines. Mathematics and statistics are basic tools for the natural and the social sciences, and they have become useful in many humanities fields as well. Information technology and the rigorous dissection of logical arguments in any discipline depend on algorithms and formal logical constructs. An educated person must be able to use quantitative information to make, understand, and evaluate arguments.

Many quantitative reasoning courses are taught through the departments of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science. Such courses may also be found in Archaeological Studies; Astronomy; Chemistry; Ecology and Evolutionary Biology; Economics; Engineering; Environmental Studies; Ethics, Politics, and Economics; Geology and Geophysics; Global Affairs; Linguistics; Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology; Music; Philosophy; Physics; Political Science; Psychology; and Sociology.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The study of language has long been one of the distinctive and defining features of a liberal arts education, and in the world of the twenty-first century, knowledge of more than one language is increasingly important. The benefits of language study include enhanced understanding of how languages work, often resulting in heightened sophistication in the use of one’s own language; unmediated access to texts otherwise available only in translation; and the ability to recognize and cross cultural barriers.

All Yale College students are required to engage in study of a foreign language, regardless of the level of proficiency at the time of matriculation. The most common paths to fulfillment of the foreign language distributional requirement are illustrated in a chart in the Academics section of the Yale College Web site. Students must enroll for at least one course credit toward satisfaction of the foreign language requirement by the end of the fourth term of enrollment, and the requirement must be completed by the end of the sixth term of enrollment.

Students who matriculate at Yale with no previous foreign language training must complete three terms of instruction in a single foreign language. This requirement is fulfilled by the completion of courses designated L1, L2, and L3 in the Yale College Programs of Study (YCPS).

Students who have taken the Advanced Placement examination in French, German, Italian, Latin, or Spanish and who present scores of 5, are recognized as having completed the intermediate level of study. Scores of 6 or 7 on the International Baccalaureate Advanced-Level examination are also accepted as evidence of intermediate-level accomplishment. Students at this level fulfill the foreign language distributional requirement by completing one course designated L5 in the YCPS. Alternatively, they may successfully complete one or more courses in a different foreign language at least through the level designated L2.

Students who have studied a foreign language before matriculating at Yale but who have not achieved a score of 5 on the Advanced Placement test in French, German, Italian, Latin, or Spanish must take a placement test offered by the appropriate language department or, for languages in which no departmental placement test is offered, consult the appropriate director of undergraduate studies (DUS). Dates and times of placement tests are given in the Calendar for the Opening Days of College and on the Center for Language Study Website. The departmental test determines whether students place into the first, second, third, or fourth term of language study (courses designated L1, L2, L3, or L4 in the YCPS), or whether they qualify for language courses beyond the fourth term of study (L5).

Students who place into the first term of a foreign language must successfully complete three courses in that language, designated L1, L2, and L3 in the YCPS.

Students who matriculate at Yale able to place into the second term of a foreign language must successfully complete three courses in that language, designated L2, L3, and L4 in the YCPS. Alternatively, they may successfully complete three courses in a different foreign language at least through the level designated L3.
Students who matriculate at Yale able to place into the third term of a foreign language must successfully complete two courses in that language, designated L3 and L4 in the YCPS. Alternatively, they may successfully complete two or more courses in a different foreign language at least through the level designated L3.

Students who matriculate at Yale able to place into the fourth term of a foreign language must successfully complete one course in that language, designated L4 in the YCPS. Alternatively, they may successfully complete one or more courses in a different foreign language at least through the level designated L3.

Students who matriculate at Yale able to place into the fifth term of a foreign language must successfully complete one course in that language, designated L4 in the YCPS. Alternatively, they may successfully complete one or more courses in a different foreign language at least through the level designated L2.

Students whose secondary school transcript shows that the language of instruction was other than English may fulfill the foreign language requirement by successfully completing ENGL 114, Writing Seminars; ENGL 120, Reading and Writing the Modern Essay; or ENGL 450, Daily Themes. Alternatively, students in this category may fulfill the requirement by successfully completing one or more courses in a third language, neither English nor the language of their secondary school instruction, at least through the level designated L2.

In order to promote firsthand experience in foreign cultures and the learning of language in real-world settings, students are permitted to apply toward the satisfaction of the foreign language requirement the completion of an approved study abroad program in a foreign-language-speaking setting if they have first completed or placed out of a language course designated L2 in the YCPS. Students seeking to undertake study at another institution or program for this purpose must consult the relevant DUS in advance of their proposed study for advice about appropriate programs and courses and for information about the approval process. Study abroad may be used in place of L1 and L2 courses only if it is part of a Yale College program, such as Yale Summer Session. Study abroad opportunities are described in the YCPS under the heading International Experience.

Intensive language courses provide the equivalent of a full year of instruction in a single term. A course designated L1–L2 in the YCPS fulfills both the L1 and the L2 levels of the foreign language distributional requirement. Similarly, a course designated L3–L4 satisfies both the L3 and the L4 levels.

Not all of the languages offered in Yale College are offered at all levels, and it may not be possible to fulfill the language requirement in some of them. Languages currently offered in Yale College include Afrikaans, Akkadian, Amharic, Arabic, Aramaic, Chinese, Coptic, Czech, Egyptian and Middle Egyptian, French, German, ancient Greek, modern Greek, Mycenaean Greek, biblical Hebrew, modern Hebrew, Hindi, Hitite, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kikuyu, Kiswahili, Korean, Latin, Nahuatl, Old Church Slavonic, Old Norse, Pali, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Sanskrit, Sesotho, Serbian/Croatian, Shona, Spanish, Sumerian, Syriac, Tamil, Tigrinya, Turkish, Twi, Ugaritic, Vietnamese, Yiddish, Yorùbá, and Zulu. Languages currently offered to Yale College students through the Shared Course Initiative include Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Dutch, Hungarian, Punjabi, modern Tibetan, and Zulu. Students wishing to fulfill the foreign language requirement in a less commonly taught language should consult the DUS in the relevant department to verify that the appropriate level of study will be offered. Students who have intermediate- or higher-level proficiency in a language other than those listed here (including American Sign Language) should consult the appropriate DUS, the appropriate director of the MacMillan Center interdisciplinary councils, or the director of the Center for Language Study to arrange for a placement examination.

Students who, for medical reasons, are not able to complete the language requirement may petition the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing for a waiver of the requirement. In granting such a waiver, the committee will normally require that a student complete four course credits in the study of a specific non-English-speaking culture.