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.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The study of languages 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, or not at all; 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 their level of proficiency at the time of matriculation. Depending on their preparation, students take one, two, or three terms of foreign language study to fulfill the distributional requirement. Students may complete an approved study abroad program in lieu of intermediate or advanced language study at Yale. Details of the foreign language distributional requirement are listed under Distributional Requirements in the Academic Regulations.

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 are 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 Data Science, Computer Science, and Economics, and the academic programs in engineering. Such courses may also be found in a range of other programs, from Archaeological Studies to Theater Studies.

WRITING

The ability to write well is one of the hallmarks of a liberally educated person 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. Hundreds of courses, spanning most 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.