

[Harvard College Program in General Education](#)

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Program in General Education

The Harvard College [Handbook for Students](#) states:

Harvard has long required that students take a set of courses outside of their concentration in order to ensure that their undergraduate education encompasses a broad range of topics and approaches. As part of the Harvard College Curricular Review, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences voted to replace the existing, thirty-year-old Core Curriculum requirements with a new Program in General Education in order to align these requirements with the educational needs of Harvard College students at the dawn of the twenty-first century. In contrast with the Core Curriculum, which required that students be exposed to a number of different “ways of knowing,” the new Program seeks explicitly to “connect a student’s liberal education – that is, an education conducted in a spirit of free inquiry, rewarding in its own right – to life beyond college.” In addition, the new Program in General Education seeks to provide new opportunities for students to learn – and faculty to teach – in ways that cut across traditional departmental and intra-University lines.

Complementing the rest of the curriculum, this program aims to achieve four goals that link the undergraduate experience to the lives students will lead after Harvard:

- to prepare students for civic engagement;
- to teach students to understand themselves as products of, and participants in, traditions of art, ideas, and values;
- to enable students to respond critically and constructively to change;
- and to develop students’ understanding of the ethical dimensions of what they say and do.

Students must complete one letter-graded course in each of the eight categories in General Education (click on the categories for their respective descriptions):

- [Aesthetic and Interpretive Understanding \(AI\)](#),
- [Culture and Belief \(CB\)](#),
- [Empirical and Mathematical Reasoning \(EMR\)](#),
- [Ethical Reasoning \(ER\)](#),

- [Science of Living Systems \(SLS\)](#),
- [Science of the Physical Universe \(SPU\)](#),
- [Societies of the World \(SW\)](#), and
- [United States in the World \(US/W\)](#).

One of these eight courses must also engage substantially with the **Study of the Past**.

In general, students should plan to take one General Education course per term. There are, however, no requirements regarding the timing of the requirements as long as all are completed by graduation. First-year students often find that General Education courses are useful for exploring potential concentrations. Other students use the General Education requirements to add some variety to their course of study.

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