

# THE CURRICULUM

Bowdoin offers a course of study leading to the degree of bachelor of arts that teaches students how to continue learning as the world changes and demands new perspectives, knowledge, and skills. The College's curriculum introduces students to the conceptual and methodological traditions of academic disciplines (i.e. areas of human knowledge) and cultivates skills in disciplined inquiry, analysis, argument, and understanding. Over the course of four years, students build their intellectual capabilities, self-confidence as independent thinkers and problem-solvers, and come to know the pleasures of discovering and developing proficiency in new areas of knowledge.

Bowdoin provides students the opportunity to design an education in the context of their own developing goals and aspirations, and in relation to the College's vision of a liberal education, including its distribution and division requirements, and the requirements of a major field of study. The structure provided by the College's distribution and division requirements provides intellectual breadth to help students navigate the curriculum in ways that encourage exploration while broadening students' capacities to view and interpret the world from a variety of perspectives. All courses completed satisfactorily during the first two years count toward Bowdoin's general education requirements—the thirty-two credits required for the degree.

Students also complete an approved major that is designed to challenge students to develop a deeper understanding of one or more areas while building self-assurance as independent and creative contributors to an area of study. Students choose a major, using the departmental, coordinate, or interdisciplinary approaches available at Bowdoin, as a way to engage a discipline in depth. Students must declare their majors in the fourth semester of enrollment and afterwards are advised by faculty members of their major departments. Bowdoin maintains academic progress records that both advisors and students can access throughout the student's career on the Polaris Degree Progress page (the student information system).

Designing an education is an education in and of itself. Experience has shown that the most fulfilling liberal arts education cannot be fully planned before the first day of class because such mapping would not permit the many new paths for exploration that students discover as they learn about unfamiliar fields, find exciting new questions and ideas, and uncover unanticipated interests and talents. Nor can a challenging education emerge if a student selects courses one by one each semester without considering the ways that courses fit within a broader intellectual landscape.

A liberal education at Bowdoin is much more than the sum of thirty-two credits and the College is intentional in promoting freedom within a wide set of choices to enable students to broaden their views of the world and of their own talents and interests, and to deepen their knowledge and capacities. Designing an education thus requires self-examination, careful thought, substantial flexibility, some intellectual daring, and the wise counsel of academic advisors.

The interaction between students and their academic advisors is a vital part of the educational experience at Bowdoin. Each student is assigned a pre-major academic advisor at the start of the first year. The pre-major academic advising system is intended to help students take full advantage of the first two years at Bowdoin and to begin to plan the remaining years by providing a framework within which a student can work with a faculty member to make informed academic decisions. Such

a partnership is particularly important during the period of transition and adjustment that typically takes place during the first year in college. Academic advisors make recommendations about courses, combinations of courses, or direct students toward other resources of the College.

Advisors are also an important source of information and support when personal, financial, family, health or other issues might impact a student's academic success. The effectiveness of the advising relationship depends on communication and the mutual commitment of the student and the advisor.

Students are obligated to comply with all policies and regulations set forth in the *Bowdoin College Catalogue and Academic Handbook* published in the academic year during which they matriculate, but they have the option to elect to follow the requirements from any other Catalogue published during their tenure at Bowdoin instead. Students considering this change should contact the Office of the Registrar (<https://www.bowdoin.edu/registrar/contact-us/>).

## Academic Requirements for the Degree (p. 1)

To qualify for the bachelor of arts degree, a student must have:

- successfully passed thirty-two full-credit courses (or the equivalent);
- spent four semesters (successfully passed sixteen credits) in residence, at least two semesters of which have been during the junior and senior years;
- completed a first-year writing seminar<sup>a</sup>; this should normally be completed by the end of the first semester and must be completed by the end of the second semester in college;
- completed at least one full-credit course (or the equivalent) in each of the following five distribution areas: mathematical, computational, or statistical reasoning; inquiry in the natural sciences; difference, power, and inequity; international perspectives; and visual and performing arts—these should normally be completed by the end of the fourth semester in college (the end of the student's sophomore year);
- completed at least one full-credit course (or the equivalent) in each of the following three divisions of the curriculum: natural science and mathematics, social and behavioral sciences, and humanities (in addition to the required course in the visual and performing arts); and
- completed all of the requirements for one approved major.

<sup>a</sup> The requirement for completing a first-year writing seminar (courses numbered 1000-1049) will only be met if the seminar is taken for regular letter grades and a minimum grade of D is earned.

All Bowdoin students must be enrolled full time and are expected to make normal progress toward their degree, which includes taking no fewer than four credits each semester. Generally, students are not allowed to remain at Bowdoin for a ninth semester. There may be rare and exceptional circumstances that impact a student's ability to complete their degree within eight semesters. Students should speak to their dean in the office of the dean of students (<https://www.bowdoin.edu/dean-of-students/staff-directory/>) for more information.

## Distribution Requirements (p. 1)

Students must earn at least one full credit for a letter grade in each of the following five distribution areas<sup>b</sup>:

1. **Difference, Power, and Inequity (DPI):** These courses examine difference in terms of power and inequity. Students learn theories, methods, and skills to analyze structures of privilege and inequality. Students confront how such structures intersect with their own experiences.
  2. **Inquiry in the Natural Sciences (INS):** In these courses students engage in the practice and methods of inquiry-based learning in the natural sciences. *This requirement is satisfied through courses that both fall within "Division A" (natural science and mathematics) and satisfy the INS learning goals.*
  3. **International Perspectives (IP):** These courses assist students in developing a critical understanding of the world beyond the United States. IP courses provide students with the tools necessary to analyze non-US cultures, societies, and states (including indigenous societies and sovereign nations within the United States and its territories), either modern or historical.
  4. **Mathematical, Computational, or Statistical Reasoning (MCSR):** These courses enable students to use mathematics and quantitative models and techniques to understand the world around them either by learning the general tools of mathematics and statistics or by applying them in a subject area.
  5. **Visual and Performing Arts (VPA):** These courses help students expand their understanding of artistic expression and judgment through creation, performance, and analysis of artistic work in the areas of dance, film, music, theater, and visual art.
- b
- First-year writing seminars, independent study courses, and honors projects do not fulfill any of the five distribution requirements.
  - Distribution requirements may only be satisfied with courses taken at Bowdoin and may not be met by Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or any other pre-matriculation credits.
  - Distribution requirements should be completed by the end of the student's fourth semester in college.
  - A course will be counted as meeting a distribution requirement if a student earns a grade of D or better; courses will only be counted if they are taken for a letter grade, though courses will count if they are required to be taken for a Credit/D/Fail grade, e.g., music ensembles, if a grade of CR (credit) is earned.
  - Students may not count the same course toward more than one distribution requirement.

## Division Requirements (p. 2)

Students must earn at least one full credit from each of the following three divisions of the curriculum<sup>c</sup>.

1. **Natural Science and Mathematics (a)**
2. **Social and Behavioral Sciences (b)**
3. **Humanities (c)**

- c
- Like the distribution requirements, division requirements may only be satisfied with courses taken at Bowdoin and may not be met by Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or any other pre-matriculation credits.
  - A course will be counted as meeting a division requirement if a student earns a grade of D or better; courses will only be counted if they are taken for a letter grade, though courses will count if they are required to be taken for a Credit/D/Fail grade, e.g., music ensembles, if a grade of CR (credit) is earned.
  - With one exception, students may count the same course to meet a division and a distribution requirement.
    - The exception is a course that is designated to meet the humanities division (c) requirement and the visual and performing arts (VPA) distribution requirement; students may not count such a course to meet both requirements.

## The Major Programs (p. 2)

Students may choose one of six basic patterns to satisfy the major requirement at Bowdoin:

- one departmental major;
- two departmental majors (a double major);
- one coordinate major<sup>a</sup>;
- one interdisciplinary major<sup>a</sup>;
- one student-designed major; or
- any of the preceding with a departmental minor.

The requirements for completing specific majors and minors in each department are presented in detail in the Departments, Programs of Instructions, and Interdisciplinary Majors section (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/>). In certain majors, students declare a concentration, which is a focused course of study within a broader major.

Students should have ample time to be exposed to a broad range of courses and experiences before focusing their educational interests and so do not declare their majors until the fourth semester of their college enrollment. Normally, students are required to declare their majors before registering for courses for the junior year or applying to participate in junior- or senior-year off-campus study programs. Students declare their majors only after consultation with a major academic advisor(s). Since some departments have courses that must be passed or criteria that must be met before a student will be accepted as a major, students are encouraged to think well in advance about possible majors and to speak with faculty about their educational interests. Students may change their majors after consultation with the relevant departments, but they may not declare a new major after the first semester of the senior year. Special procedures exist for student-designed majors; these are described below.

## Departmental and Program Majors (p. 2)

Departmental and program majors are offered in the following areas:

- Africana Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/africana-studies/>)
- Anthropology (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/anthropology/>)
- Art History (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/art/>)
- Asian Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/asian-studies/>)
- Biochemistry (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/biochemistry/>)

- Biology (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/biology/>)
- Chemistry (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/chemistry/>)
- Classics (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/classics/>)
- Computer Science (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/computer-science/>)
- Earth and Oceanographic Science (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/earth-oceanographic-science/>)
- Economics (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/economics/>)
- English (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/english/>)
- Francophone Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/romance-languages-literatures/>)
- Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/gender-sexuality-womens-studies/>)
- German (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/german/>)
- Government and Legal Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/government-legal-studies/>)
- Hispanic Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/romance-languages-literatures/>)
- History (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/history/>)
- Italian Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/romance-languages-literatures/>)
- Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/latin-american-studies/>)
- Mathematics (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/mathematics/>)
- Music (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/music/>)
- Neuroscience (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/neuroscience/>)
- Philosophy (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/philosophy/>)
- Physics (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/physics-astronomy/>)
- Psychology (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/psychology/>)
- Religion (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/religion/>)
- Romance Languages and Literatures (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/romance-languages-literatures/>)
- Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/russian/>)
- Sociology (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/sociology/>)
- Theater and Dance (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/theater-dance/>)

- Visual Arts (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/art/>)

A student may choose to satisfy the requirements of one department or program (single major) or to satisfy all of the requirements set by two departments or programs (double major). A student who chooses a double major may drop one major at any time.

### Coordinate Major (p. 3)

The coordinate major encourages specialization in an area of learning within the framework of a recognized academic discipline. Coordinate majors are offered in digital and computational studies, education, and environmental studies. In these majors, students must pair the coordinate major with a departmental major, applying the coordinate discipline within the major field. For specific descriptions of these majors, see the following sections of the Catalogue: Digital and Computational Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/dcs/>), Education (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/education/>), and Environmental Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/environmental-studies/>).<sup>a</sup>

### Interdisciplinary Major (p. 3)

Interdisciplinary majors are designed to tie together the offerings and major requirements of two separate departments by focusing on a theme that integrates the two areas. Such majors usually fulfill most or all of the requirements of two separate departments and usually entail a special project to achieve a synthesis of the disciplines involved.<sup>a</sup>

Anticipating that many students will be interested in certain patterns of interdisciplinary studies, several departments have specified standard requirements for interdisciplinary majors; these are:

- Art History and Archaeology
- Art History and Visual Arts
- Chemical Physics
- Computer Science and Mathematics
- English and Theater
- Mathematics and Economics
- Mathematics and Education
- Physics and Education

### Student-Designed Major (p. 3)

Some students may wish to pursue a major program that does not fit the pattern of a departmental major, a coordinate major, or an interdisciplinary major. In such cases, a student may work with two faculty members to develop a major program that demonstrates significant strength in at least two departments. Such strength is to be shown in both the number and pattern of courses involved. A synthesizing project is required. Guidelines for the development of student-designed majors are available from the Office of the Registrar (<https://www.bowdoin.edu/registrar/>). Student-designed majors require the approval of the Curriculum Implementation Committee (<https://www.bowdoin.edu/registrar/faculty/teaching/>). Students must submit their proposals to the Curriculum Implementation Committee (<https://www.bowdoin.edu/registrar/faculty/teaching/>) by December 1 of their sophomore year.

### The Minor (p. 3)

Most departments and programs offer one or more minor programs consisting of no fewer than four courses and no more than seven

courses, including all prerequisites. A minor program must be planned with the student's minor department no later than the end of the first semester of the senior year. Students may pursue one minor only and a minor may be dropped at any time.

The following departments and programs offer a minor:

- Africana Studies
- Anthropology
- Art (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/art/>) (Art History or Visual Arts)
- Asian Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/asian-studies/>) (Asian Studies, Chinese, or Japanese)
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Cinema Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/cinema-studies/>)<sup>b</sup>
- Classics (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/classics/>) (Archaeology, Classical Studies, Classics, Greek, or Latin)
- Computer Science
- Digital and Computational Studies
- Earth and Oceanographic Science
- Economics (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/economics/>) (Economics or Economics and Finance)
- Education
- English
- Environmental Studies
- Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
- German
- Government and Legal Studies
- History
- Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies
- Mathematics
- Middle Eastern and North African Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/mena/>) (Arabic<sup>b</sup> or Middle Eastern and North African Studies<sup>b</sup>)
- Music (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/music/>) (Music or Music Performance)
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Psychology
- Religion
- Romance Languages and Literatures (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/romance-languages-literatures/>) (Francophone Studies, Hispanic Studies, or Italian Studies)
- Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies
- Sociology
- Theater and Dance (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/theater-dance/>) (Theater or Dance)
- Urban Studies (<https://catalogue.bowdoin.edu/departments-programs/urban-studies/>)<sup>b</sup>

- a Coordinate majors and interdisciplinary majors may not normally be combined with any other type of major. If a student has a compelling academic reason to pursue an interdisciplinary major with another departmental major or a coordinate major with another departmental major, they may seek an exception from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for Curriculum (<https://www.bowdoin.edu/academic-affairs/contact/>).
- b These are only offered as minors.