

Columbia College-General Studies Committee on Instruction

**Policy on maximum number of points per term, maximum number of programs of study,  
and double-counting certain courses toward two programs of study**

Adopted in Spring 2017, to be put into effect Fall 2017

The faculty of Columbia College and The School of General Studies expect all undergraduate students to make a serious and substantive commitment to their academic studies, while also having sufficient time to engage in co-curricular activities and to ensure individual well-being. In this way, faculty members seek to support a structure in which students have a rich intellectual, social, and personal experience and are part of a robust undergraduate community at Columbia.

The undergraduate curriculum of Columbia College and the School of General Studies provides a balanced intellectual experience by requiring three distinct areas of study: (1) the Core Curriculum, which provides a foundational education in the liberal arts and sciences; (2) the major or concentration, which provides greater depth of knowledge and disciplinary specialization; and (3) elective coursework, which allows students to discover new interests, to acquire diverse perspectives, or to develop an additional field of knowledge. Students are able to complete coursework in the Core, the major/concentration, and elective coursework and to earn enough points of credit to graduate in eight semesters by taking a courseload of 4-5 courses per semester, with an average courseload of 15-16 points of credit per semester. Accordingly, the joint CC-GS Committee on Instruction now sets the maximum number of credits which an undergraduate student in Columbia College or General Studies can earn in a single semester at 18 points.

It is important to note what a point of credit signifies, according to the regulations established by the New York State Department of Education: for every point of credit that a course earns, students are expected to attend class one hour per week and spend *a minimum of* two hours on homework. For a 3-point course, then, students should expect to attend class three hours per week and to spend *at least* six hours per week on homework for that course. It follows that, if a student carries a courseload of 15 credits, the student is committing to a schedule of *a minimum of* 45 hours per week of academic class time and coursework. If a student takes a courseload of 18 credits, the maximum number of points allowed, the student is committing to a schedule of *a minimum of* 54 hours per week of academic class time and coursework. The members of the Committee on Instruction believe that a student's academic responsibilities should typically take up 40-50 hours per week—again, supporting the policy that a typical courseload should be comprised of 15-16 points of credit per semester. While the total number of hours of coursework

for an individual student may be somewhat variable from semester to semester, the standard of 40-50 hours per week will remain the general expectation for students.

By setting the maximum number of points of credit per term at 18, faculty members expect that each student will make thoughtful decisions about the best combination of courses and programs, with an emphasis on quality of experience over quantity of courses or programs. Students should work with their advisers to develop a plan to make steady and reasonable progress through the three areas of study—the Core Curriculum, the major, and the elective coursework—and each student should be encouraged to revisit this plan regularly as the student learns not only about the variety of curricular offerings, but also about the student’s own intellectual passions and natural habits of mind that can be discovered and honed through the pursuit of a particular major or concentration.

The goal of a major or concentration is to provide a student with advanced knowledge and skills so that the student can effectively apply disciplinary methods of understanding to a question or problem or project. This outcome can be achieved only through consistent and focused engagement with a field of study, both in and out of the classroom. For this reason, most undergraduate students pursue a single major or concentration. The pursuit of too many programs of study detracts from a student’s ability to accomplish the important educational goals of the major or concentration, so while students may choose to use their elective coursework to pursue a second program of study (major or concentration or special concentration), the Faculty of Columbia College and The School of General Studies ask undergraduate students to prioritize their own intellectual development by choosing no more than two programs of study.

If a student does decide to pursue two programs, they may not both be owned by the same offering unit (department, institute, or center). For example, a student may not declare programs in Russian Language and Culture and in Slavic Studies, both of which are owned by the Department of Slavic Languages; similarly, a student may not declare programs in Mathematics and in Applied Mathematics, both of which are owned by the Department of Mathematics. All joint majors (e.g., Economics-Political Science) will be considered as owned by both offering units, so that a student may not, for example, major in both Political Science and Economics-Political Science. If a student chooses to declare two programs, the student can, in certain situations, apply a single course to both programs (“double-counting”). There are three conditions under which students may apply a single course to two programs, and depending on the two programs declared, some or all of these conditions may apply:

1. If two programs both require the same coursework to teach fundamental skills needed for the field, those courses may be applied to both programs. The Committee on Instruction has defined that coursework as the following: (1) elementary and intermediate foreign language courses, (2) the calculus sequence (I through IV, or Honors A and B), (3) introductory courses in Statistics (STAT UN1101 or 1201), and (4) the introductory course in computer programming (COMS W1004). If faculty members feel that other

courses should be included in this category, those courses would need to be approved for such purpose by the Committee on Instruction.

2. In addition to double-counting any fundamental courses enumerated above, a student pursuing two programs (majors or concentrations) may apply a maximum of two classes to both programs, if applicable. Offering departments, institutes, or centers may choose to restrict the double-counting of particular courses, and such restrictions cannot be appealed.
3. In addition to those courses that can be double-counted noted above, a maximum of two courses taken in the Core Curriculum can also be counted toward the requirements of a program of study (major, concentration, special concentration), if applicable. Offering departments, institutes, or centers may choose to restrict the double-counting of courses taken in the Core Curriculum, and such restrictions cannot be appealed.

In summary, the following policies will be put into effect as of Fall 2017:

- The maximum amount of credits for which a Columbia College or General Studies student may register in a semester will be 18.
- The maximum number of programs of study which a Columbia College or General Studies student may earn toward the degree will be 2.
- Students pursuing two programs of study will be able to count certain courses toward both programs of study, under the specific conditions set by the CC-GS Committee on Instruction and the relevant academic offering units.