Advice for Choosing Courses

Deciding on which courses to take can be a little complicated, and maybe even intimidating. Either way, it is an important decision, which takes careful consideration. We put this handout together to help you think through this decision so that you can make the most informed and beneficial choice for you. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office.

Prerequisites

Some classes have prerequisite requirements that students must meet in order to qualify for the course. A prerequisite is a specific class, or equivalent, that the student should have already taken before signing up for the course in question. For example, the prerequisite for our Applied Statistics course is college algebra or equivalent. This means that, if you have not already taken a college algebra class, or a class equivalent to it, you cannot enroll in the Applied Statistics course.

Generally, 100-200 level courses will be your best options. These will typically be courses that will help you fill general course requirements or fulfill prerequisite requirements for higher level classes. If you aren’t sure if you qualify for a particular course, contact us so that we can help you figure it out.

Credit/ Pre-Matriculation

You can take up to seven credits. How you get there is up to you. (I.e., you can take two 3 credit classes and one 1-credit class, one 4-credit class and one 3-credit class, or you could just take two 3-credit classes and only take 6 credits during the program.)

You are taking actual college classes, which means actual college credit. At the end of the program, you will have a transcript from Washington University in St. Louis. You will have to submit this transcript to any college or university you are applying to.

Because you are enrolling in these courses before you are a full-time student at a college or university, the credits you are earning are considered pre-matriculation credits.

You will not be able to use the credits you earn toward both high school and college. If you intend to use credit earned through the High School Summer Scholars Program for high school graduation requirements, you must make those arrangements with your high school. Every university has its own pre-matriculation transfer credit policy, so do your research as you make future plans.

Be strategic. Research the schools you intend to apply to and see if they accept pre-matriculation credits, or if there is a limit to the number of credits they will accept.

- Some students like to try to get some of their anticipated General Education courses out of the way, but keep in mind that, depending on the university, those credits may not always transfer.
- Some schools will allow you to “test out” of certain beginning level classes. Is there a subject that you feel confident enough to test out of versus just applying the credit you’ve already earned?

Grades matter. When considering transferring credits, remember that most schools require that a minimum grade be earned in order to be accepted.

- As previously stated, you will be earning a transcript that other universities will see. Make sure you are taking classes that you will take seriously and that you feel you can do well in.
- There are other grade options. You have the choice to change to Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit up until about the 4th week of classes. For these options, you will either receive Pass/Credit or Fail/No
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Credit instead of a letter grade. This is a good option for classes you aren’t sure about or classes that are challenging but you want to stay in because you enjoy the material.

Scheduling

Please Note: If you are taking a course during the summer these are the same courses offered in the regular fall or spring semesters, but now in a shorter time frame. This may mean more homework and reading outside of the classroom.

Other things you should consider:

- Is it important to you that you are available for the events or programming offered in the evening? If you take evening classes, be aware that they may interfere with programming or events. You will not be able to miss class or reschedule events.
- When choosing your classes, make sure they don’t overlap. Write your weekly schedule to be sure there are no overlaps and that you have breaks when you want them.
- Do you like to eat lunch at a specific time? If you keep a strict eating schedule, think about scheduling your classes so that you have a break for lunch. Some students make sure they have a break at 12pm-1pm every day. Other students sign up for the classes they want first, and then figure out lunch or snack time based on their schedule.
- Think about your early classes versus late classes - you are responsible for your punctuality and attendance in class.
  - Do you prefer getting classes out of the way in the morning versus sleeping in?
  - Do you want to have a break between classes?

Note: WashU allows a 10-15 minute grace period between classes. This is enough time to travel from one class to another, but not necessarily to stop for coffee or food.

Interests & Strengths

- Do you know what you want to major in? Some students choose courses based on what they think they want their major to be.
- Do you want to try something new? If there is a subject that you are interested in, but haven’t had much experience with yet, you could use this as an opportunity to get more familiar with it. Don’t be afraid to explore new things.
- What are your strengths? Do you prefer tests or papers? What about long reading assignments or presentations? Sometimes you can guess what type of assignments a class will require, but often times, you won’t know until you get the syllabus on the first day.
- Are you still a little unsure about the class you chose? Always choose a few back-up classes in case your first choices don’t work for some reason. You will be able to add or drop classes until the end of the first week. Keep in mind: even if you make the change by the deadline, you are not guaranteed a spot in the class because some classes get full.