Undergraduate Programs

The General Studies Program

The General Studies Program (GSP) is a two-year, full-time day program that allows students to complete an Associate in Arts degree, which forms the first half of a typical bachelor’s degree program at NYU. GSP students are selected for admission by the NYU Undergraduate Admissions Committee, which offers the opportunity to attend GSP to a select group of freshman.

GSP is based on a broadly defined interdisciplinary core curriculum that offers the kind of comprehensive liberal arts background typically required during the first two years of college. But, we depart from the typical pattern. We think that an education should be carefully designed. The GSP has a unified curriculum where one course relates to another; where all aspects of a curriculum focus on a common goal; and where both students and faculty are committed to the development of a community dedicated to learning.

Our aim is to give our students the best possible foundation in the liberal arts and in the sciences and to help them develop the ability to think analytically, read critically, and write effectively. These are the skills that every student needs to complete a bachelor’s degree at NYU, and beyond that, to become successful in their chosen profession or with graduate studies. The curriculum covers the development of civilization from ancient times to the present. The subject matter is organized to concentrate on one historical period at a time, with interrelated courses that deal with materials from all of the humanities. Students read many original historical texts rather than textbooks.

In GSP, students are taught by faculty members who are actively involved in their fields and who bring enormous enthusiasm and dedication to the classroom. Individual attention is a major component of the program’s success. Classes are small and teachers are readily available for guidance both inside and outside the classroom. Each student has an adviser who will help to plan his or her academic program. The various program elements—small classes, an outstanding faculty, individual advisement, and a fully integrated course of study—create an ideal learning environment. GSP functions like a small liberal arts college within the framework of a major urban university.

The Academic Program

The academic program is composed of a core liberal education curriculum that is based on the reading of great books and on elective courses drawn from NYU’s six other undergraduate colleges, allowing students to explore
various major options during their first two years. Our goal is to help students meet the liberal education requirements for the bachelor’s degree and to provide the latitude for students to begin a major. At the end of two years, a student who successfully completes the GSP will have accumulated 64 credits toward his or her NYU bachelor’s degree.

All freshmen are required to complete a two-semester freshman writing course focusing on expository writing, the presentation of an argument, and the elements of research. The freshman core courses Cultural Foundations I and II and Social Foundations I and II are based on the study of great texts from antiquity to the beginning of the modern era. In the Cultural Foundations sequence, students study literature, the visual and performing arts, and music. In the Social Foundations sequence, students focus on philosophy, religion, political and social theory, and history. Taken together, the two sequences can be seen as a large-scale cultural history. The sequences also provide an introduction to skills in critical analysis and synthetic thinking that students need for successful study in all academic disciplines. In addition to the core curriculum, freshman students usually take a course in a Global Cultures that introduces the history and culture of Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, South Asia, or East Asia and a course in the natural sciences.

During the sophomore year, students are required to complete two sophomore seminars, one from each category, in Topics in Modern Culture and Topics in Modern Society. Each semester, nearly 40 seminars are offered from which students may choose, and students are expected to take one seminar per term. Typically, sophomore seminars explore in depth the critical issues of the modern experience (1800 to the present). Many of these topical seminars grow from themes that are introduced in a general way in the freshman foundation sequences, but here the emphasis is on exploring a single issue in greater detail. The sophomore seminars explicitly draw on the skills developed in the freshman year. These skills in writing and in textual analysis are used by students to develop research projects and to critique contributions of other seminar members.

In the sophomore year, each student, with the aid of his or her adviser, chooses elective courses from NYU’s extensive offerings. These electives are designed to help students select a major or begin work in a particular field. By the end of the sophomore year, a student should be able to confidently declare a major.

**International Programs and Study Abroad**

New York University encourages every undergraduate to have an international experience. These experiences can take many forms, and some of them are available to students while they are in the GSP.

**General Studies in Florence**

GSP sophomores can spend one semester living and studying at La Pietra in Florence, Italy. La Pietra, a 57-acre estate overlooking Florence from the hillside north of the city, was bequeathed to the University by Sir Harold Acton, a patron of the arts. On the grounds are five villas, which house residences for students and faculty, classrooms, computer labs, study lounges, and dining and exercise facilities.

Each semester 40 GSP sophomores are able to study in Florence. The sophomore semester at La Pietra enriches and builds on the freshman experience through visits to the many important museums and historic sites in Florence. Students also travel in groups to other significant Italian cities and historical locales, such as Rome, Venice, Siena, and Assisi. Students take the required GSP sophomore seminars and Italian language courses, which are offered at every level from beginning to intermediate to advanced. GSP faculty members teach essentially the same core courses in both Florence and New York City. In addition, the College of Arts and Science, the Leonard N. Stern School of Business, the Steinhardt School of
Education, and the Gallatin School of Individualized Study offer a variety of appropriate sophomore electives. The sophomore semester in Florence fits as seamlessly with the program at Washington Square so that all requirements can be met on time.

Additional Study Abroad Programs

Many GSP students spend a semester in their junior or senior year at one of NYU’s seven study abroad centers located in Florence, London, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Berlin and Accra, Ghana. Students can also participate in more than 40 summer study abroad opportunities in 25 international locations, including Africa, Austria, the Balkans, Belgium, China, Cuba, the Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Academic Advisement

From the outset of a student’s college career, academic advising is an essential part of his or her undergraduate experience. During the freshman year, each GSP student is assigned an academic adviser for his or her two years in GSP. Students meet with their advisers to discuss course selection, academic and professional objectives, and techniques for succeeding in college. First-year students are encouraged to meet with their advisers regularly, especially during the process of choosing electives and making plans for selecting a major. Because majors are officially declared at the beginning of the junior year, students are expected to spend time during their first two years of college preparing for their eventual choice of a major and perhaps a minor. Advisers also can assist students with questions about other NYU colleges and can sometimes provide a “road map” for students by suggesting where to go next, or to whom a student should speak about a particular area of interest or academic department. Together, GSP students and advisers establish useful working relationships that foster academic excellence and personal growth.

In addition to meeting with their academic adviser, GSP students are required to attend a pre-registration information session each semester. These sessions are hosted by the full-time advisement staff and are designed to get students ready for registration and particularly for choosing electives. During these advisement meetings, students are reminded of the academic requirements necessary for the completion of the GSP and for the internal transfer from the GSP into the NYU college into which they have been guaranteed admission.

Choosing Electives

During the freshman year, students take most of their courses in the GSP but during the sophomore year, students combine required courses with elective courses taken at the NYU bachelor’s division to which they will transfer after GSP. With assistance from their advisors, sophomores select their electives with a view toward their anticipated major.

Internal Transfer

All sophomores in the GSP should be gathering information about the school to which they plan to transfer at the end of the sophomore year. To help prepare them for the transfer, representatives of the NYU undergraduate schools address students during the fall semester about majors offered in their schools and about transfer issues and requirements. At the end of the sophomore year, students who have successfully completed their GSP requirements transfer as juniors to the NYU college to which they have been guaranteed admission when they were accepted to NYU as freshmen. Students graduate from the GSP with an associate’s degree and at least 64 credits, half of the 128 credits necessary for a bachelor’s degree. They leave the GSP with an excellent liberal arts education and enhanced learning skills that serve them well as they take the next step toward their
bachelor's degrees.

The General Studies Program Degree Requirements

General Core

Prose Composition
Prose Composition I
Prose Composition II or
Prose Composition II: The World Through Art or
Prose Composition II: Service Learning

Cultural Foundations
Cultural Foundations I
Cultural Foundations II

Social Foundations
Social Foundations I
Social Foundations II
Global Cultures (choose one)
African Cultures
Middle Eastern Cultures
East Asian Cultures
South Asian Cultures
Latin American Cultures

Natural Sciences* (choose one)
Environmental Studies
History of the Universe
Life Science

*Students pursuing a pre-health track do not take the science courses listed here, but will be advised to take appropriate required courses at the College of Arts and Science.

Sophomore Seminars (to be taken during sophomore year)

Topics in Modern Culture
and
Topics in Modern Society

Electives (Students select courses from either the list below or from courses approved by the NYU undergraduate division to which they will transfer, with assistance from their advisors)

Economics I
Economics II
Creative Writing I
Creative Writing II