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# Core Curriculum

## The Core Curriculum: An Engagement with God's World

Life is more than a job. Most students graduating from Calvin College will pursue a career in the professions. They will become teachers, accountants, engineers, ministers, architects, research biologists, doctors, speech therapists, lawyers, social workers, nurses, and the like. But whatever their particular employment, they will also become citizens, neighbors, parents, parishioners, consumers, and, more generally, participants in North American culture.

The core curriculum at Calvin College is a preparation for life. While the major or the professional program prepares students for the successful pursuit of a job, the core equips students for a life of informed and effective Christian service in contemporary society at large, for an engagement with God's world.

As such, the core curriculum at Calvin College participates in a long tradition of liberal arts education, a tradition that stretches back the ancient Greco-Roman world. Originally designed to prepare those free from the necessity of work for a life of public service, the liberal arts course of study began with the "trivium" - logic, rhetoric, and grammar. Logic was to enhance a student's ability to construct and evaluate knowledge claims; rhetoric, to develop the powers of persuasive communication in the public square; grammar, not just to learn the mechanics of a language, but to shape character through exposure to the ideals and examples embedded in the canonical texts of a culture. In short, the aim of the trivium was to render the liberal arts student intelligent, effective, and virtuous.

The goal of the core curriculum at Calvin College is likewise divided into three parts: Knowledge, skills, and virtues. The courses in the core are designed to impart a basic knowledge of God, the world, and ourselves; to develop the basic skills in oral, written, and visual communication, cultural discernment, and physical activity; and to cultivate such dispositions as patience, diligence, honesty, charity, and hope that make for a life well-lived— of benefit to others and pleasing to God.

The spirit of the Christian liberal arts curriculum permeates all of the degree programs of the college. Traditionally, most students complete the Bachelor of Arts or the Bachelor of Science degree programs, either of which may include a teacher certification component. Other degrees offered by the college include the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art, the Bachelor of Science in Recreation, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy, Bachelor of Science in Public Accountancy, the Bachelor of Science in Engineering, the Bachelor of Social Work, the Bachelor of Arts in Speech Pathology and Audiology, Bachelor of Computer Science, and the Master of Education. Cooperative Bachelor of Science degrees are offered with a number of other institutions in medical technology, occupational therapy, and special education.

Because of the complexity of the Calvin curriculum and the many alternative ways of meeting the formal requirements, students must confer with their advisors regularly in planning their academic programs. Students may graduate under the Calvin catalog in effect at the time of their initial registration or any succeeding catalog as long as the catalog chosen is not more than seven years old when graduation requirements are completed. Students who have not attended the College for more than seven years must re-enter the College under the catalog in effect at the time of re-entry.

## The Core Requirements

In keeping with the tradition of liberal arts education, the core curriculum of Calvin College is designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills required for an informed and effective life of Christian service in contemporary society. Strong high school preparation may reduce the number of courses required in the core, and that number may be further reduced by special examinations in any subject.

Required core courses are divided into 4 components: The core gateway, core skills, core studies, and the core capstone. The gateway into the core is made up of two linked courses required of all first-year students: Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind (DCM). Prelude is progressive orientation to Calvin as an academic community in the Reformed tradition. It is taught during the fall. DCM is a first-year interim course designed to introduce students to a Reformed Christian worldview and its relevance for contemporary issues. First-year students taking a 122 language course during the interim can take a section of DCM in the spring semester. Core skills courses, such as written rhetoric or research and information technology, are best taken early in a student's career at Calvin, as they advance those skills essential to academic success at the collegiate level. The core studies are designed to introduce students to the primary domains and dimensions of life. Typically, a number of them will overlap with courses required in a student's major or professional program. The core capstone is comprised of integrative studies courses, typically taken in the junior or senior year, which draw together the broad themes of the core curriculum in connection with a particular theme or discipline. The cross-cultural engagement requirement may be fulfilled in a number of ways: Through designated off-campus interim courses; semester abroad programs; or approved semester courses at Calvin with a strong cross-cultural component.

#### **GATEWAY & PRELUDE**

o Developing a Christian Mind                      one course from:      IDIS 150

*Transfer credit not accepted for Developing a Christian Mind core*

o First-Year Prelude                                      one course from:      IDIS 149

#### **CORE CURRICULUM**

o Written Rhetoric                                      one of the following: ENGL 101 or  
ENGL 100/102 (two-course,  
full-year sequence)

o Information Technology                              one course from:      IDIS 110; CS108;  
ENGR 101

*Exemption exam offered.*

o Rhetoric in Culture                                      one course from:      ART 153; CAS 101,140,  
141, 214; IDIS 102;  
SCES 214

o Health and Fitness

    Personal Fitness                                      one course from:      PER 101-129, PE 222

    Leisure and Lifetime                                      one course from:      PER 130-159, PE 221

    Skill Enhancement                                      one course from:      PER 160-189

*A student participating in a varsity or junior varsity sport for a full season is exempt from the one-hour skill enhancement category.*

o Foreign Language                                      one of the following: CHIN 202; DUTC 202;  
FREN 113, 123, 202;  
GERM 123, 202;  
GREE 202, 206, 207  
JAPN 202;  
LATN 202, 205;  
LCTL 202;  
SPAN 202, 203

*High School Exemption from Foreign Language requirement is possible.*

*Students who have taken at least 4 years of high school level foreign language (C or better in each high school term) are exempt from Calvin's requirement. Students who have taken less than 4 years will be asked to take a language placement test.*





## Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science Degrees

The formal requirements for a Calvin College bachelor's degree include the following: Successful completion of 124 semester hours, completion of three interim courses of three credit hours or more, completion of the designated program of study and the designated core, and a minimum grade point average of 2.0 (some programs require a 2.5 GPA) both overall and in the program of concentration. Not more than 5 semester hours of basic physical education or 8 semester hours in applied music and drama may be applied to graduation requirements except when such courses are a designated part of a required major or minor program. No more than 12 semester hours of internship credit may be applied to graduation requirements.

Students who have completed at least 58 semester hours in biology, chemistry, computer science, the earth sciences, engineering, mathematics, and physics may elect to receive a Bachelor of Science degree.

Students desiring to earn a second baccalaureate degree from Calvin College must meet all of the requirements of the second degree and complete a minimum of 145 semester hours.

## Interim Course

Calvin is on a system under which students take only one three or four semester hour course during the three-week January term, commonly called Interim. Most Interim classes meet mornings or afternoons, but those involving laboratories and in-service experiences may require full-day participation. Because of their informal and intensive nature, most Interim courses have enrollment limits. To meet requirements for a Calvin degree, students must complete at least three Interim courses (a course, to meet the interim requirement must be at least three semester hours). Transfer students must complete one Interim course for each year in attendance at Calvin and students may not take more than two Interim courses in a single department. Interim courses are graded honors (H), satisfactory (S), or unsatisfactory (U), except those courses that satisfy core requirements and other specially designated courses, which are graded in the conventional A–F system. A number of one semester hour P.E. courses are also offered during interim. One of these may be taken in addition to the required three semester hour course.

Calvin College is associated with a number of similar colleges with January interim programs, making possible the exchange of students during the interim. Information is available from the Director of Off-Campus Programs.

Members of the community who are not enrolled as students in any college are invited to register as visitors in interim classes if the permission of the instructor is given. Formal admission to the college is not required, but each visitor must register with the Office of the Registrar before attending class. The fee for each course visited is \$55, which includes campus parking privileges. This invitation to visitors extends to off-campus interim courses as well. However, professors leading off-campus courses give first priority to student enrollment; if space is available, visitors may register for the course and pay the costs associated with the off-campus interim and an additional administrative fee of \$275.

## Programs of Concentration (Majors and Minors)

Majors. Every degree-seeking student must fulfill the requirements of a faculty-approved departmental or group major. Although such major concentrations are not normally chosen until the second semester of the sophomore year, most programs do presuppose the completion of specific freshman and sophomore courses. Official admission to a major program requires the formal approval of a department or program advisor and the completion of a declaration form. Once a declaration form is completed, a student may access a copy of their Academic Evaluation Report, which details the student's remaining academic requirements. Whenever students change their major, they must again submit a declaration form for the new major. Teacher education group majors and some departmental majors for teachers may be applied only to teacher certification programs.

To be admitted to a department's major program a student must have earned at least a C (2.0) in each course designated as a prerequisite for admission, unless that department stipulates a C (2.0) average in two or more prerequisite courses. To be admitted to a group concentration a student must have met the grade point average required for admission by the primary department within that group. A student not maintaining a minimum average of C (2.0) in the program of concentration may be permitted to remain in that program for a single semester of probation.

The various programs of concentration are specified in the section of the catalog, which describes departmental programs and course offerings. Group majors designed for teacher certification programs are described in the Education section.

Students may also initiate interdisciplinary (IDIS) programs of concentration other than those formally approved by the faculty. Such majors require a minimum of twelve courses, ten of which must be from two disciplines with no fewer than four from either. At least two of the courses in each discipline must be advanced courses. The remaining two courses needed to meet the twelve-course minimum must be chosen from a third discipline. Students must provide a written rationale for such programs, indicating how the chosen disciplines relate to each other and how the proposed course requirements constitute a coherent field of study. Such proposals require the approval of the registrar and of the chairs of the departments from which the ten courses are selected. IDIS forms are available in the registrar's office and replace the Declaration of Major/Minor form.

**Minors.** Optional six-course departmental minors and group minors are possible in certain fields. A 2.0 average in the minor program courses is required for graduation in them. Most of the minors are described in the departmental sections of the catalog. Group minors require the written approval of the designated advisor. In addition the college offers the following interdisciplinary minors:

- African and African Diaspora Studies
- Archaeology
- Asian Studies
- Environmental Studies
- Gender Studies
- German Studies
- International Development Studies
- Journalism
- Latin American Studies
- Medieval Studies
- Missions
- Urban Studies
- Youth Ministry Leadership

Only those minors described in the Teacher Education Programs section are approved for teacher certification.

**Overlap between major and minor (or supplementary) concentrations.** A student's major and minor (or supplementary) concentration shall consist of at least fourteen distinct courses of three semester hours or more; moreover, when some courses may apply toward both concentrations, no more than two courses shall be counted as satisfying the requirements of both the major and minor (or supplementary) concentrations. This policy has the following implications:

| <i>Courses required<br/>in the major</i> | <i>Maximum<br/>overlap permitted</i> | <i>Minimum # of<br/>distinct courses required</i> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| 8  | 0                                    | 14  |
| 9  | 1                                    | 14  |
| 10                                       | 2                                    | 14  |
| 11 or more                               | 2                                    | 15 or more  |

**Overlap between two majors.** A double major, i.e., two college recognized major concentrations, shall consist of a minimum of sixteen distinct courses of three semester hours or more. When some courses may apply toward both concentrations, no more than three courses shall be counted as satisfying the requirements of both major concentrations. This policy has the following implications:

| <i>Total courses<br/>in two majors</i> | <i>Maximum<br/>overlap permitted</i> | <i>Minimum # of<br/>distinct courses required</i> |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| 16                                     | 0                                    | 16  |
| 17                                     | 1                                    | 16  |
| 18                                     | 2                                    | 16  |
| 19                                     | 3                                    | 16  |
| 20 or more                             | 3                                    | 17 or more  |

**Overlap between minors.** There may be no overlaps between minors.