

The Vassar Intensive & Experiential Curriculum

Guidelines for Students

Overview

The "Vassar Intensive Experiential Work" initiative is a key part of a linked set of curricular reforms which were passed by the faculty on October 5, 2016 and which will go into effect for the 2019-2020 academic year. The word "intensive" describes a broad range of student learning opportunities mentored by faculty that go beyond regular classroom teaching. The initiative is accompanied by other linked structural changes designed to create space in the curriculum to foster and recognize this kind of close work with students. Taken together, these curricular initiatives are designed to recognize and catalyze deeper learning, to encourage more meaningful and close interactions among students and faculty, and to create space and opportunity for exciting, forward-looking explorations of what a Vassar education can and should be.

Intensives Defined

Intensives are envisioned as innovative learning opportunities that will complement more traditional courses by extending beyond the classroom for a variety of faculty-mentored experiences requiring a high level of student agency and independence. Because instructors will offer intensives to fit their own areas of expertise or to respond to student interests and proposals, there is no set list of criteria that every offering will fit. The following descriptors, however, capture the spirit of the intensives curriculum. In their proposals for new intensives, instructors should clarify which items on the list below will apply to their plans:

- Project-, group-, or workshop-based
- Collaborative engagement between students and instructors
- Intentional partnerships within the nearby community, the Hudson Valley, or other parts of the world
- Field/travel experiences
- Mentoring rather than lecture-based
- Integrating various aspects of students' previous studies
- Fluid time and space structures
- Focused research experiences
- Student-driven – responsive to student initiative
- Non-traditional course schedules

NOTE: Intensives may be for .5 or 1 unit, guided by the **Credit-Hour Equivalency Statement**:

"Vassar courses for which a student earns one unit toward graduation require a minimum of 140 hours of total student work. For classroom courses that meet for at least three hours per week (three 50-minute sessions, two 75-minute sessions, or one three-hour session), the 140 hours are normally divided into one-third instruction and other scheduled activities and two-thirds supplementary work or study, although the ratio may vary somewhat according to course material and/or instructional design. For two-hour seminars that meet once a week, the ratio of in-class work to out-of-class work is roughly 1:4.

Non-classroom courses such as independent work, projects, and theses may vary in their distribution of work, as appropriate. For community-engaged learning, the 140 hours are divided into 80 hours in the student's placement and 60 hours of reflective and/or analytic work under the direction of a faculty supervisor."

"Courses for which a student receives 0.5, 1.5, or 2 units of credit have minimum workload expectations that are proportional to the expectations for one-unit courses (0.5 times, 1.5 times, and 2.0 times as much, respectively)."

Major requirements

The maximum number of units that may be required in the rebalanced curriculum is 11.5, no more than 10 of which may be traditional classroom units. Departments and programs that offer intensives may not include more than 10 traditional courses in their requirements for the major. During the period of transition (fall 2019 and spring 2022) students should consult with departments and programs, and with the Dean of Studies office about how to complete major and campus-wide graduation requirements, respectively. Because of changes to the curriculum, it may be necessary to substitute new course offerings for previous requirements. Each department/program will communicate the choices available to ensure that students can complete their major requirements.

Student load

Students may take a maximum of 4.5 courses per semester. No more than 4 of these may be classroom units.

Credits to graduate

The number of units required to graduate: 32.