

## Possible models for undergraduate programs: Two year foundation plus two years in a Major/Minor or degree program

*"General education," in our view, is not a set of extraneous hurdles to be cleared en route to the major, but an integral part of a liberal education stretching across all four years."*

The Study of Undergraduate Education at Stanford (January 2012)  
[http://news.stanford.edu/news/2012/january/SUES\\_Report.pdf](http://news.stanford.edu/news/2012/january/SUES_Report.pdf)

A two year foundation program is one in which a generic or semi-generic first two years forms a bridge to specialized study in the final two years. The learning outcomes inherent in this model provide students with a foundational set of skills and understandings that are built upon in the final two years of an increasingly specialized program of study. The mix of common, required, and elective courses in the first two years provides the opportunity for a student to be exposed to a variety of disciplines and intellectual approaches at a level designed to both pique curiosity and to provide foundational conceptual knowledge for more in-depth study later. The final two years allow for a deeper disciplinary focus, but one that has been enriched and informed by the generalist approach of the foundation years.

The tables below show some possible configurations. It may be that this model is more suited to the BA than to other degree programs, but it has the flexibility to also offer interesting opportunities for interdisciplinary work across several faculties and departments. The capstone credits in the final year could provide a vehicle for interdisciplinary teamwork by students working on community-based projects.

	Common required courses [credits]	Required courses - from a basket of courses [credits]	Elective courses [credits]	Required courses / Major / Minor / Degree [credits]	Capstone course [credits]	Total credits per year
Year 1	2 [6]	0	8 [24]	0	0	[30]
Year 2	2 [6]	4 [12]	4 [12]	0	0	[30]
Year 3	0	0	3 [9]	7 [21]	0	[30]
Year 4	0	0	2 [6]	6 [18]	2 [6]	[30]

Year 1	Electives [24]		Common required [6]
Year 2	Electives [12]	Required from basket of courses [12]	Common required [6]
Year 3	Electives [9]	Required from Major / Minor / Degree program [21]	
Year 4	Electives [6]	Required from Major / Minor / Degree program [18]	Capstone [6]

Advantages:

- Breadth (these advantages are similar to those offered in other foundation-based models, the rationale for which has been explained in Mark Blackell's paper)
- Exposure to areas outside silo departments creates intellectually enriching interdisciplinary opportunities for both students and faculty
- Enables focus on practical or vocational skills and credentials / employability / preparation for graduate school in final year
- Capstone enables community outreach/connection; multi-disciplinary teams; opportunity for career-related activities; bridge to career
- The model may be advantageous for student recruitment and retention as it offers more choice and customizability. This may be attractive to students to are seeking a more tailored or individualized experience.
- The model can provide added viability to small departments