



Yale College Council
Preregistration Recommendations

January 2013



Introduction & Survey Demographics

In the fall of 2013 it was brought to the Yale College Council's attention that some students miss preregistration deadlines and feel that this negatively impacts their academic experience at Yale College. YCC administered a survey on various academic issues to 1,602 freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, between November 26 and December 8,¹ and has compiled its findings on the subject of preregistration into this report. Respondents to the survey were evenly distributed by year and field of study.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	2014		324	20%
2	2015		410	26%
3	2016		410	26%
4	2017		458	29%
	Total		1,602	100%

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Humanities		567	37%
2	STEM		649	43%
3	Social Sciences		656	43%

Overview of Preregistration Process

Shopping period is one of the unique aspects of Yale's academic life that provides more flexibility for students to choose professors and courses that fit within their academic interests. However, this flexibility in some instances leads to a complicated and confusing process when students have to preregister for courses ahead of time. Because of

¹ Survey questions developed with input from the Office of Institutional Research.



the discrepancy between the different fields regarding preregistration, many students do not know what the requirements or deadlines are and as a result miss out on classes they are interested in.

There are many opportunities for students to preregister or apply for courses in order to secure their spot in a popular seminar or lecture. Some majors allow preregistration for their upper-level courses, the most common being Economics, English, History, and Political Science. Beyond these majors, students also can preregister for College Seminars, Freshman Seminars, some language courses, introductory English courses, introductory Mathematics courses, and special programs such as Directed Studies or Perspectives on Science and Engineering. Each of these programs differs in the way they are promoted to students, when their registrations are due, and in the actual application process.

The administration has made some recent improvements, including a new registration page and email reminders from Assistant Dean Levesque. After conducting research with students, professors, and administrators, we believe that additional changes can make preregistration more efficient and rewarding for everyone.



Current Situation

Many students will start to plan their “bluebooking” process only later to find out they had to preregister for a course days, weeks, or—in some cases—months ahead of time. In our survey:

- 47.6% of juniors and seniors (319/669), and 38% percent of all students (535/1424), have missed a preregistration deadline that they were interested in.
- Additionally, 36% of the students (193/533) who missed a deadline said it “negatively affected their academic career at Yale.” In total, 19% (232/1197) feel that their academic careers have been damaged by missing registration deadlines.

On our survey, some students responded that those who missed a preregistration deadline did not deserve to be in the course and that they should be more organized. While we understand that sentiment, there are some barriers that impede the ability of all students to apply to the courses they are interested in. For example:

- In order to even be notified about preregistration, some departments require that students declare their major first on OCS. A student who is in the process of deciding between two majors can miss the opportunity to preregister for their desired major as a result.
- Most programs are not consistent with their preregistration schedule. In one more extreme case, one program emailed students in July and announced that the application was open, giving students only one week to preregister.



- While not technically an official preregistration process, some individual seminars require students to submit applications before shopping period in order to be eligible to enroll in the course. These are not posted publically but are only listed on course syllabi.

Many students viewed preregistration for advanced seminars in particular as leaving room for improvement. Most of the comments we received highlighted a perceived inequity in the current process, citing a need for “a fairer pre-registration system for seminars.” Similarly, students requested “equal opportunity for preregistration, especially for upperclassmen who need specific courses to graduate.”

As a result, the Yale College Council proposes that the administration adopt the guidelines recommended later in this report to help increase the transparency and opportunity of the preregistration process. The preregistration process and application for seminars differs greatly between majors; however, we believe there are some simple changes that can make the process more efficient for students, administrators, and faculty.

Peer Institution Policies

As the only Ivy League institution with an official shopping period, we have inherent differences from our peers in terms of registering for courses. Shopping period facilitates greater exploration of the liberal arts curriculum and allows students to create a



semester that best fits their interests and needs. It is worth protecting, but can be improved with a more standardized and consistent process for selective courses with preregistration.

Most of our peer institutions have one centralized website where students are able to access course registrations and see course requirements, similar to Yale's Online Course Selection (OCS). We could benefit from having the same clear deadline for preregistration for all courses.

Most colleges have one central time period for all students to log on and select their courses rather than a shopping period or similar period. This can lead to high levels of competition and stress, and as a result Yale students are very happy with the current shopping period.

Recommendations

1. Make the current "Preregistration and Preference Selection" web page more comprehensive by including the preregistration deadlines for different majors, programs, and other courses. It would include when the application opens, when it is due, and include the link to department websites.
2. Adopt mandatory guidelines for preregistration and include additional suggested guidelines for all departments. These will be put in place with the advice and consent of the Directors of Undergraduate Studies. Preliminary recommendations



are:

- A. An application deadline that is announced by the DUS or program director at least one month ahead of the first day of class in either semester, both on the individual program website and on the centralized website.
- B. An application deadline that opens at the earliest 3 weeks before classes start and is open for at least 2 weeks, OR, the instatement of two major preregistration deadlines; one for advanced seminars and courses where professors review applications and need more time to place students, and another for courses that do not need that same time frame and the application can close a week before courses start. In either case, faculty members who want to have an application process for their course (of any form) must list their course on this centralized page as well, which could have a section called: courses with unique applications.

Contact Information

This project is managed by YCC Representative Kevin Kory (SY '15) and is supervised by

YCC Academics Chair David Lawrence (CC '15). They can be contacted at

kevin.kory@yale.edu and david.r.lawrence@yale.edu.