

The Merry Old Land of AHS

Ha ha ha

Ho ho ho

And a couple of Tra la las

That's how we laugh the day away

In the merry old land of AHS...

(borrowed, with spelling modification, from “Merry old land of Oz” lyrics in “The Wizard of Oz”)

Welcome to the land of AHS. This document is your guide to one of the most wondrous portions of the Olin curriculum. Over the rainbow we go...

What exactly do we mean by AHS?

AHS is an acronym that stands for Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Olin approaches the identification of specific AHS fields in a broad and inclusive manner.

- **Arts** fields include literary arts such as creative writing and poetry; performing arts such as dance, music, and theater; and visual arts such as ceramics, drawing, filmmaking, painting, photography, and sculpture.
- **Humanities** fields include philosophy, history, literature, cultural studies, and religion.
- **Social Science** fields include psychology, economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, archeology, linguistics.

These lists offer examples of AHS fields, but they are not comprehensive. In addition, the distinction between arts, humanities, and social sciences does not impact a student's studies at Olin and the example fields listed above might fit into more than one of these categories. However, distinctions between AHS and non-AHS disciplines are important – students often ask whether a specific course can count as AHS and therefore be used to

meet AHS requirements, for example, when registering for AHS courses taken during a study away semester. The definition of AHS includes the following distinctions:

AHS is not STEM(M). AHS does not include technical fields or coursework that fall within the areas of engineering, science, or mathematics, nor does it include medical fields.

AHS is not Entrepreneurship (E!). Olin abbreviates Entrepreneurship as “E!” and it is an important aspect of Olin’s curriculum, not included within the AHS acronym. However, Olin uses the term “AHSE!” to refer to the nontechnical aspects of the Olin curriculum that encompass both AHS and Entrepreneurship. The distinction between AHS and E! matters for some aspects of Olin’s graduation requirements (such as meeting the minimum number of AHS credits) and is less important for others (the AHSE! Concentration can consist of a mixture of AHS and E! coursework). These requirements will be discussed below in effusive detail.

AHS is not a catch-all category for nontechnical courses. Do not assume that anything that doesn’t receive Engineering, Science, or Math credit will automatically receive AHS credit. Some courses do not fall into Engineering, Science, or Math categories, and also do not fall into the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, or Entrepreneurship fields. These courses receive “General Degree” credit – they still impact a student’s GPA and count towards the 120 credits needed for graduation, but do not count towards any AHSE requirements.

AHS is not the band “A-ha.” A-ha is a Norwegian synth pop band known for their 1985 international hit song “Take on Me.” AHS refers to academic disciplines in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. These are not the same.

What are the AHSE! Requirements?

The AHSE! Requirements are described in the Olin Catalog and fall into two categories: credit requirements and course requirements.

Credit requirements. Two credit requirements apply to AHS: (a) all students must complete a *minimum of 28 AHS plus E! credits* to graduate; and (b) *at least 12 of these credits must be “pure” AHS (see bulleted definition above) and not E!.*

Course requirements. Students must complete three course requirements that impact the selection of AHSE! coursework. These requirements are the *AHS Foundation Requirement*, the *Entrepreneurship Foundation Requirement* and the *AHS and/or Entrepreneurship Concentration Requirement*, all described below in magisterial detail.

The AHS Foundation Requirement

Students must enroll in the AHS Foundation course in their first semester at Olin and can choose from approximately six options, all offered at Olin.

The AHS Foundation is an introductory-level course that introduces students to one or more AHS disciplines. AHS Foundations help students develop oral, graphical, visual, aural, and/or written communication skills as is relevant to the chosen discipline. In addition, all of Olin’s AHS Foundation courses help students connect AHS content, skills, and perspectives to the practice of engineering.

The AHS Foundation course, as with all first-year student fall semester courses, is taken pass/no credit. A passing grade indicates completion of this requirement. Students who do not pass the AHS Foundation in their first semester at Olin must satisfy this requirement in a future semester. This can be accomplished in one of three ways.

- Students may register for one of the AHS Foundation courses offered in a future fall semester, if openings exist in these courses. Because first year student registration takes place by the end of summer, available seats in AHS Foundation courses will not be known at the time of registration in the prior spring semester. Non-first year students will therefore not be able to register for an AHS Foundation course until shortly before the start of the fall semester.

- Students may petition the ARB and request approval to take an intermediate-level AHS course at Olin and count it as an AHS Foundation alternative. The identification of possible AHS Foundation course alternatives is done on a case-by-case basis. The intermediate course needs to include a significant communication component, needs to offer connections to the practice of engineering, and – in most cases – needs to be taught by an instructor who has also taught an AHS Foundation course at some point.
- Students may petition the ARB to take an introductory-level AHS course at an Olin partner institution (Babson, Wellesley, or Brandeis) and use it to satisfy the AHS Foundation requirement. The identification of possible AHS Foundation course alternatives is done on a case-by-case basis. In general, the introductory course needs to include a significant communication component and should include an interactive class discussion component as well.

Because the AHS Foundation course satisfies an Olin course requirement, it cannot be “double counted” to also satisfy the AHS Concentration requirement.

The E! Foundation Requirement

Students must enroll in the E! Foundation course, *Products and Markets (P&M)*, in their second semester at Olin. This Olin course introduces many fundamental concepts of entrepreneurship related to value creation and doing good in the world. It is offered every spring semester.

Because *Products and Markets*, the E! Foundation course, satisfies an Olin course requirement, it cannot be “double counted” to also satisfy the AHSE! Concentration requirement.

The AHSE! Concentration Requirement

The AHSE! Concentration is a set of AHS and/or Entrepreneurship courses totaling 12 or more credits. These courses can be taken at Olin and/or at other institutions such as Babson, Wellesley, Brandeis, or during a student's "Away" semester.

The goal of the AHSE! Concentration is to offer students the opportunity to choose an AHS or E! topic or field of interest and pursue some depth in that topic or field through a coherent, interconnected set of courses. All courses in the concentration must fall within AHS or E! disciplines, though it is possible to combine AHS courses with E! courses in the same concentration as long as they exhibit sufficient connectedness and coherence.

The criteria and threshold for a "connected" and "coherent" set of courses is difficult to express in general terms, because there are many ways to construct and rationalize an AHS or E! Concentration. Olin expects these courses to build upon each other in some manner that makes the set of courses more valuable than the sum of their parts because they produce valuable connections that collectively lead to a deeper understanding. The following examples illustrate different approvable or non-approvable concentrations.

EXAMPLES OF AHSE! CONCENTRATIONS LIKELY TO BE REJECTED:

- Three introductory language courses in three different languages do not constitute an AHS Concentration because they do not connect to or build upon each other in a meaningful manner. The fact that these are all languages does not mean that the courses are connected. Ways to adjust this AHS Concentration to enable its approval include...
 - Taking a sequence of three language courses in the same language.
 - Taking three linguistics courses, which would offer tools and concepts related to the broader study of language.
- Two courses in business management and one course in Chinese language do not constitute an AHS Concentration because they do not connect to or build upon each other in a meaningful manner. Even if the student plans to pursue business

management opportunities in China at some point, the courses themselves are not connected. This Concentration would be approved if the student took three business courses or three Chinese language courses.

EXAMPLES OF APPROVABLE AHSE! CONCENTRATIONS:

- Three courses in the same academic discipline are typically approved as a concentration, since they offer an opportunity to develop a deeper and more coherent understanding of the tools and perspectives of that discipline.
- Three courses that explore the history, economy, and political structure of the same nation connect to each other (even though they be offered separately in history, economics, and political science departments at different universities) because the approaches and topics from each course would benefit the other courses or lead to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of that nation.
- Two courses in the same discipline or in two closely related disciplines, combined with an AHS Capstone course (described below in luxurious detail) are typically approved as a concentration, because the AHS Capstone can be shaped in a manner that allows it to add coherence and connections to the two courses.

Regardless of the AHS field or the degree of connectedness between courses, three categories of AHS or E! courses *cannot* be included in concentrations.

- Pass/fail (or pass/no credit) courses cannot be included because AHS or E! Concentration courses must be taken for a letter grade. The only exception to this rule occurs if a course is only offered for a non-letter grade and the student has no choice.
- Independent study or research activities are not allowed in AHS or E! Concentrations.
- Courses that satisfy the AHS or E! Foundation requirements cannot be double counted to also satisfy the AHS or E! Concentration requirement.

Once an Olin student has identified a potential set of AHSE! Concentration courses, they submit an AHS or E! Concentration proposal via an online form. These proposals are solicited by Olin during the major declaration process, though students are welcome to submit a proposal earlier. The proposal has three components: a *list of coursework* totaling 12 or more credits; a *title* for the concentration that clearly describes the common theme that unifies the courses; and a *justification paragraph* explaining how all the courses coherently connect to each other. Students generally proceed through four stages when completing their AHS or E! Concentration:

1. A concentration proposal has not been submitted yet.
2. The concentration proposal has been submitted but not yet approved.
3. The concentration proposal has been approved but the courses in the concentration have not been completed.
4. The courses in the concentration have been completed, which means the concentration requirement has been met.

If a proposal is approved but the student decides they do not wish to complete the proposed courses (or if the student is unable to take all the proposed courses) they must submit a new proposal. There is no penalty for doing so; students can change their plan as often as they wish. After changing their plan, students should submit a new proposal describing their revised plan, to avoid the risk of completing several courses only to learn that the concentration will not be approved.

If an AHS or E! Concentration proposal is not approved, the response to the rejected proposal will explain why the courses do not meet the requirements. Students are then expected to submit a new concentration proposal, either with different courses or with a clearer explanation of why these courses meet the expectations of an AHS or E! Concentration.

A proposal can be submitted for a set of courses that have already been completed, though there is no guarantee that this proposal will be approved. Olin recommends that all

students submit a proposal as soon as they have identified a set of courses that might satisfy the requirement.

The AHS Prepstone and Capstone. Olin offers “AHS Prepstone” and “AHS Capstone” courses as an option for any student.

All students who plan to take an AHS Capstone should enroll in the one-credit **AHS Prepstone** course in the prior semester. This is an asynchronously scheduled pass/fail course that gives students time and support to plan their AHS Capstone project and write their AHS Capstone proposal prior to the start of the actual AHS Capstone.

The **AHS Capstone** course is a four-credit graded project in an AHS field of the student’s choice, typically offered each spring semester. AHS Capstone students meet as a group with the AHS Capstone instructor once per week to share ideas with each other, receive feedback from the AHS Capstone instructor, and discuss upcoming project milestones. Students also select a “mentor,” a professor or advanced practitioner credentialed in the field of their AHS project, to serve as their disciplinary advisor. The AHS Capstone is assessed by both the AHS Capstone instructor (who assesses communication and project planning competencies) as well as the mentor (who assesses the quality of the final disciplinary product). AHS Capstones culminate in a public presentation of all student work, featuring some snacks, a bottle of Fanta, and Bing Crosby tunes.

The AHS Capstone is a project that builds upon a student’s prior or concurrent AHS Concentration coursework. Students are expected to have completed (or be concurrently completing) at least two AHS courses that relate to the topic of the AHS Capstone project. The AHS Capstone can be used to complete an AHS Concentration because it “caps off” the earlier coursework via a student-designed application. Most students complete 8 credits of AHS coursework and add their 4 credit AHS Capstone to complete a 12 credit AHS Concentration, but some students take more than 8 credits of AHS Coursework prior to or alongside the Capstone. An AHS Capstone can also be used to strengthen the connection between two previously taken AHS courses, because the topic of the Capstone

project can be designed in a manner that connects the two courses and deepens the student's understanding of them.