

Thoughts from students¹ on the QS proposal

1. General sentiment. The committee was generally in favor of the proposal. Members saw the merit in taking one course in the computer science, math, or statistics department and didn't think that mandating a single class throughout four years to come from one of these departments is too overbearing, especially given the importance of curricular exploration.

2. An important side-note: The heightened importance of good lower-level courses. Despite a general sense of approval, it was strongly felt that a change in the requirement should be coupled with an effort ensuring that courses especially the lower-level ones serve as valuable introductions to quantitative thinking. It was thought that such lower-level courses should achieve the following:

- Strike an auspicious balance between theoretical background and broad application
 - Too much of an emphasis on theory might prevent students from seeing the big picture, while not enough of such an emphasis is contrary to the breadth of the liberal-arts education
- Unveil the quantitative questions folded into everyday life; deliver upon this “promise” by introducing techniques used to approach these questions and the theory underlying them

3. Reservations. Reservations, albeit sparse, were the following:

- If overqualified students fall to the lowest energy state and take lower-level courses to fulfill the requirement through the path of least resistance (which sometimes happens), this may disadvantage students with weaker quantitative backgrounds enrolled in lower-level courses.
 - Thus, it might also be important for there to be medium-level courses (e.g., Math 103-level courses) with the same “everyday” appeal.
- Enrollments in the introductory courses might be very large as a result of this policy. Given the importance of problem solving in these courses and that problem solving works well in a small-group environment it was thought that quality of learning might suffer as a result.
 - Small-group, in-class problem solving exercises (in addition to recitation sections) might be one option to pursue.

¹Eight student representatives, members of the DSG Academic Affairs committee, engaged in a conversation surrounding the QS proposal and gave their thoughts. This document reflects the sentiments that were expressed during this meeting. *Compiled and written by Kaveh Danesh (kd62@duke.edu), DSG VP for Academic Affairs.*