



2019-2020 Course Information: Frequently Asked Questions

AP Capstone Pathway

My son/daughter is only interested in completing AP Seminar and AP Research. Is that permitted?

Yes. Students who complete AP Seminar and AP Research will receive the AP Capstone Certificate.

My son/daughter has not taken AP Seminar. Can they still register for AP Research?

No. In order to register for AP Research, students must have completed the pre-requisite AP Seminar course.

Department of English

Can I get my son or daughter to read ahead to prepare for the next grade?

Skill development in English is a gradual process, and we do not encourage students to prepare for upcoming years before they are ready. Also, each grade level makes use of a wide variety of books for study, and teachers are not constrained to teach a common text. However, we do encourage students to read for enrichment.

How will students know which English course is right for them?

All English courses at each level will help students to develop their written and oral communication skills as well as their understanding of digital media.

Students who excelled in Spoken Language 10 or 11 may wish to further develop their rhetorical skills by taking AP Language and Composition 12. To deepen understanding of literature, students may take Literary Studies 11 or Creative Writing 11, and then either English Studies 12 or AP Literature and Composition 12.

Are there any elective English courses?

Yes, Writing 12 is offered to Grade 12 students, but they must be concurrently enrolled in English Studies 12, AP Literature and Composition 12, or AP Language and Composition 12 to fulfill their graduation requirements.

Are there any mandatory provincial assessments in English?

Most students write the BC Graduation Literacy Assessment as a graduation requirement. This assessment measures literacy proficiency across curricula. They will have more than one opportunity to write this assessment.

Department of Mathematics

How do students choose the correct mathematics course?

It is important that a student take a course in which they will have the greatest chance of being successful in terms of mathematical growth and confidence. Students should base their decisions on current proficiency in mathematics and future post-secondary plans. Students should identify which pathway best supports their post-secondary aspirations.

My son/daughter took Pre-Calculus 11 but would now like to take Foundations of Math 12. Is this possible?

Yes. For students that are planning on social science degrees, humanities, nursing, or fine arts, this is one possible pathway.

Many students seem to have a tutor, but my son/daughter does not. Should they get a tutor?

Students are encouraged to seek additional support from their classroom teacher first. Additionally, there is a math teacher scheduled for lunch help most days of the cycle and students can access the Academic Support Center for math help in the evenings. If the student finds they require more support than can be obtained through these sources, they might choose to seek the help of a qualified, external tutor.

Do all students take calculus? Do they have to take calculus for university?

No, calculus is not required for graduation from high school. It is recommended, however, for some university programs, such as sciences, engineering, and some commerce programs.

Are there any standardized BC government assessments?

All students will be required to write the Numeracy assessment as part of their Graduation Program. Students usually take it in Grade 10. The result of the assessment will appear on the student's school transcript but does not affect a course grade.

Can students take Grade 10, 11, or 12 mathematics courses in the summer?

We do NOT recommend this option as summer courses do not complete the course with the same depth and sometimes omit topics. Students should discuss any intention of taking a summer school course with their mathematics teacher and their Academic Advisor.

Department of Modern Languages

How will the student be placed in Languages?

All Grade 9 students will take a second language and it is important that a student be placed in a level in which they will have the greatest chance of being successful both in terms of their linguistic growth and confidence. Depending on their language choice(s), students will be assessed throughout September to ensure accurate placement.

At what point can the student move to a different level?

Following course selection, the placement of students is reviewed towards the end of the school year. Generally, it is based on the student's achievement and the recommendation of his/her teacher.

Can the student take a second foreign language course?

Yes. As a Grade 9, 10, 11, or 12 elective course, the department offers French, Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese 12 (2019-2020 only).

Is a second language a requirement or a benefit for admissions at the post-secondary level?

A second language at the grade 11 or 12 level is required for admission to UBC, SFU, and the Faculty of Humanities at UVic; some American colleges require three or sometimes four years of study (in high school) of a second language. In addition, some programs at university require a second language, particularly in areas of study such as journalism, Arts programs and cultural or regional studies (e.g. Pacific and Asian Studies).

Department of Physical Education

Can students take Sport Science 10 and Athletic Leadership 10 instead of Physical & Health Education 10?

No. Physical & Health Education 10 is a required course in every grade 10 student schedule.

Sport Science 10 and Athletic Leadership 10 are half year courses. Is either one a prerequisite for the other?

No, they can be taken individually, or both can be taken in any order.

Can students get credit for their physical education courses in both Grade 11 and 12?

Yes, students earn credit in Active Living 11 and Active Living 12, even if they take the same stream (e.g. Yoga, Human Performance) each year.

Department of Sciences

Can students take science courses in the summer?

Yes, although this is NOT recommended because shortened science courses lack the building of laboratory skills. It is particularly not recommended to take Physics 11 in summer school as there is insufficient time to build the necessary conceptual thinking and problem-solving skills for a successful participation and achievement in Physics 12 or in AP Physics.

Do students need the school's permission to take Science by distance or online education?

Only international students need the school's permission to register in BC distance courses. However, we recommend that all students discuss their plans with a current science teacher and Academic Advisor.

Should my son/daughter take three science courses in grade 11?

Very few university programs require three science courses at Grade 11 & 12 level.

Who decides if my son/daughter should be in a Pre-AP class?

Students select their own courses in Science. It is important that students be in a course in which they will have the greatest chance of being successful. The Head of Department and teachers will review the course pre-selections in May and ensure that a reasonable choice has been made.

Should my son/daughter be taking AP science courses?

A student with a high aptitude, interest, and level of success in a particular science may wish to challenge themselves by taking an AP course. In biology and chemistry, we recommend students take the Pre-AP 11 course. In physics, students start AP Physics 1 in Grade 11. AP Environmental Science is open to anyone with Science 10.

Department of Visual Arts / Department of Music / Department of Drama

Is AP Art History a studio art course?

No. This is a course for students who like history, writing and looking at broad issues; the course is a Social Studies offering. It is particularly useful for students who will be doing architecture at university as a large part of the course deals with the history of architecture.

Is there an option for students to learn drafting and technical drawing?

Yes! In 2019-20 we will offer Drafting 10 for the first time. This is a half-year elective option. It will focus on traditional and computer assisted (CAD) drafting and design techniques.

How is 3D Applied Design & Installation 11 scheduled?

This is an evening course but is a regular credit course that runs all year. The course runs for 3 hours on Tuesday or Wednesday evenings and students sign up for one day or the other. Students should carefully consider their enrolment in this course and their extra-curricular commitments.

If a student is interested in taking AP Art courses in grade 12, which course should they take in Grade 11?

Most students take Art Studio 11 but other visual art courses (e.g. Digital Art 11, 3D Installation and Design) are also potential paths to AP Art courses. Students should speak with their Art teacher to determine the best option.

Should a student take a Fine Arts course in grade 12? Is this important for university applications?

Many universities are now using broad-based admission practices in Canada, U.S. and abroad. This means that the breadth of a student's overall program, including fine and performing arts, is considered and a variety of disciplines should be represented.

Is it possible for a student to take 2 music courses (i.e. choir & band, strings & choir or band & strings) in Grade 9?

Although it is not possible to initially sign up for 2 music courses at the same time, there are options for accommodating such requests on an individual basis. It is best to indicate your first choice on SDS pre-selection, and then to talk to the music teacher about participating in another ensemble.

Are there options for singing/songwriting, rock band jamming, piano/voice pop, etc. at the school?

All the SMUS equipment and music spaces are available to all students to use when they are not in use by the teachers. There is jam space in the strings room, and mics set up in the choir and strings room. Students are invited to use the grand pianos in the classrooms whenever they are available.

Are there private lessons offered at the SMUS?

We have a number of excellent teachers that come to our campus, specifically to teach our boarding students who wish to have lessons. If they have room in their schedules they would be happy to teach day students as well. Please ask a music teacher if you would like help to set up music lessons. This year we have lessons for piano, violin, cello, bass, classical guitar, non-classical guitar, voice, percussion/drums, and most wind instruments.

Social Studies Department

What are graduation requirements the for Social Studies?

Students graduating in 2018 or after must earn credit in *at least* one Grade 11 or 12 Social Studies course.

What has happened to Social Studies 11?

In alignment with the new BC Curriculum initiatives, SMUS no longer offers Social Studies 11.

Which SMUS courses satisfy the Social Studies 11/12 graduation requirements in 2019-20?

Comparative Cultures 12
Criminology and Social Justice 12
Economic Theory 12
World History 12
Law Studies 12
Physical Geography 12

Many of these courses are designed to prepare students for success in a related AP course. Students are encouraged to take the Grade 12 level course in their Grade 11 year, and the AP course in their Grade 12 year.

Do AP courses meet the Social Studies graduation requirement?

No, AP courses do not satisfy the Social Studies graduation requirement. However, students can opt to earn credit in one of the above courses while taking their AP course and thereby fulfill the graduation requirement.

Can students take AP Psychology in Grade 11?

Due to its mature content, this course is only offered to Grade 12 students. It does not earn a Social Studies graduation requirement credit.