

Skidmore College

University Without Walls

Academic Policies

**Approved by UWW Faculty Committee January 23, 2008
(revised August 21, 2008)
(Effective for 2008-2009 Academic Year)**

I. The University Without Walls

Mission

Skidmore College offers adult students wherever they live and work the opportunity to pursue a Skidmore degree through the University Without Walls (UWW), its external baccalaureate program. Skidmore faculty and UWW staff work intensively with students to develop individualized programs suited to their life experiences and intellectual and career goals. Students pursue their degrees through traditional classroom learning, on-line courses, and faculty-supervised independent studies consistent with Skidmore's high educational and curricular standards.

UWW serves as an educational laboratory for innovation in teaching, learning, and research. The mission of Skidmore and the UWW is to promote intellectual excellence, student engagement, intercultural and global understanding, and the education of an informed, responsible citizenry – linking the theoretical and applied learning that Skidmore founder Lucy Scribner called “mind and hand.”

History

UWW was founded in 1971, one of a group of experiments in nontraditional education jointly funded by the Ford Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education and housed at a number of institutions, including Skidmore College. In 1975, the UWW program at Skidmore College was permanently adopted by the Skidmore faculty. Since 1975, over 1,300 students have earned Skidmore College degrees through the UWW program.

Community

Although UWW students live all over the world, they are a part of the greater Skidmore College community and are bound by its honor contract:

I hereby accept membership in the Skidmore College community and, with full realization of the responsibilities inherent in membership, do agree to adhere to honesty and integrity in all relationships, to be considerate of the rights of others, and to abide by college regulations.

All members of the Skidmore College community, including students, faculty, and staff are parties to the honor contract and are expected to abide by its provisions. A detailed discussion of the requirements of the honor contract for all students can be found at http://www.skidmore.edu/campuslife/handbook/06-07/responsibilities_rights01.htm

Violations of the honor contract will be dealt with severely and may lead to the withdrawal of the privilege of membership in the Skidmore College community.

UWW maintains its own process for investigating integrity violations. Alleged violations of the honor contract are reported to the UWW Director who convenes a hearing committee comprised of the Director, the chair of the UWW Committee, and the student's Academic Advisor. The hearing committee makes a report to the Dean of Special Programs and the UWW Committee with a recommendation for action. Final actions are decided by the Dean of Special Programs and the UWW Committee. Penalties range from a reprimand to withdrawal from the program.

Nondiscrimination

It is the policy of Skidmore College to prohibit discrimination for or against any individual or group of its students, prospective students, employees, or prospective employees on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, disability, age, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation. The college has established mechanisms to provide prompt, fair, and impartial consideration of any complaint of discrimination. Inquiries concerning application of this policy should be directed to the Assistant Director for Equal Employment Opportunity and Workforce Diversity in the Human Resources Office

The UWW Committee

The UWW Committee is composed of five (5) members of the Skidmore faculty, the Dean of Special Programs, and the Director and Academic Advisors of UWW. It has the responsibility and authority to determine academic policies and procedures, admit and dismiss students, approve degree plans and final project proposals, and make recommendations on the granting of degrees. In general, it exercises oversight of the UWW program on behalf of the faculty of Skidmore College.

II. Joining the UWW Program

Admissions

UWW seeks students who exhibit strong academic promise, the ability to plan cooperatively with advisors, the ability to work independently, and a passion to learn and grow intellectually. One way an applicant can exhibit these characteristics is through recent success in a demanding academic program. However, many applicants are adults who have been out of school for some time. In these cases, there are many other ways in which they can demonstrate their suitability for the UWW program. Exceptional artistic achievement, career success, humanitarian service, whether as a professional or a dedicated volunteer, and advancement in military service, are among the ways applicants can demonstrate their intellectual capacities and their ability to succeed.

All applicants are required to come to campus for a personal interview with two advisors to discuss their educational goals and resources for study. In some cases, applicants who are coming from a long distance or may otherwise experience significant hardship in coming to campus may request an admissions interview on the telephone or via

videoconference (again, with two advisors). Applicants should consult the admissions coordinator about the possibility of waiving the initial on campus admissions interview.

Skidmore College students who have been disqualified from returning to Skidmore's residential program must have the permission of the Dean of Studies Office and the Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) before applying to the UWW program.

Transfer Credit

UWW has no limit to the number or age of college credits it will accept in transfer. Most courses in the liberal arts, business, human services/social work, communications, education and the arts taken at prior institutions may be transferred into the UWW program if they were completed with a grade of C or better. A preliminary estimate of acceptable transfer credits is made by Academic Advisors at the time of application. This is only an estimate; actual credits accepted in transfer and applied towards the student's specific UWW degree program must ultimately be approved by the UWW Committee at the time of Degree Plan evaluation and approval.

Sometimes changes or advances in a particular discipline may make it necessary for a student to retake a course that was already accepted for transfer credit. Such a decision will normally be taken at the time a student decides on a focus of study. In addition, students who receive a substantial amount of transfer credit may need to exceed the minimum amount of credits required for a college degree, in order to comply with the specific degree requirements of UWW.

Courses completed at foreign universities may be transferable to UWW. Except in certain limited cases, UWW expects students with international transcripts from non-English-language institutions to have those translated and evaluated at the time of application. Organizations such as World Education Services perform this function for foreign students seeking admission to US higher education institutions. College-level credit earned in foreign secondary institutions (e.g., through A-level examinations, 13th year *gymnasium*-type programs, etc.) may also be transferable with an appropriate grade.

Advanced Placement tests with a score of 4 or 5 may be accepted in transfer. Standardized examinations offered by the College Level Examination Program, the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), Excelsior College, and select other credit-bearing tests may be accepted in transfer if a passing score is earned. High school courses taken for college credit may be acceptable for transfer if passed by a C or better.

Experiential Learning Credit

UWW may grant credit for on-the-job learning at the college level in the liberal arts, business, human services/social work, communications, education or the arts. Areas of learning need not correspond to specific courses at Skidmore College to be worthy of credit but should be appropriate to baccalaureate-level learning. Evaluation of

experiential learning is initially performed by a member of the Skidmore faculty, the student's Faculty Advisor, or another scholar appointed by the UWW office, and ultimately approved by the UWW Committee. The evaluator determines what materials the student must submit to document learning. These materials may include but are not limited to an annotated resume, a portfolio of work, and/or a narrative description of learning. In some cases, the evaluator finds it helpful to talk directly with the candidate in person or by phone. Evaluation of experiential learning is performed only for matriculated students in the UWW program.

UWW offers experiential learning credit for advanced skills in languages other than English. Evaluation is conducted by a member of the Skidmore faculty or another capable individual appointed by the UWW office. Typically, native-speaker fluency in a language will be awarded 12 credits.

Acceptance

Students who are accepted into the UWW program are expected to enroll during the next available enrollment period. Students should contact the UWW office as soon as possible after receiving their letter of acceptance to indicate their enrollment plans. In some cases, enrollment may be deferred beyond the next semester. Students who wish to defer must have the permission of the UWW Director.

Enrollment and matriculation

Students must come to the Skidmore College campus in person to enroll. In very rare cases, this requirement can be modified or waived by the UWW Director. Students should plan to allow at least three hours for the enrollment meeting.

Student Status

Matriculation in UWW is continuous. Students are deemed to be matriculated in the UWW program from the day of enrollment until they have graduated, withdrawn, or been granted a leave of absence. Students will be billed for every semester in which they are matriculated whether or not they have registered for any courses during that period. As such, every student matriculated in UWW will have a "student status" each semester. This "student status" is determined based on the student's enrollment status on the first day after the end of the "add/drop" period for any semester, and will in turn determine the amount billed to the student by UWW. (See "student status" in the section on "Finances".)

Withdrawal from the Program

Students may request withdrawal from the program at any time. However, students will not be granted a refund for a portion of a semester. Requests for withdrawal must be in writing. A student who has been withdrawn from the program and wishes to return must reapply. While UWW reserves the right not to accept former students who reapply, the program encourages those whose successful academic careers have been interrupted by life circumstances to make every effort to return and complete their degrees.

UWW reserves the right to withdraw students for nonpayment or for failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress. Students who are withdrawn are expected to pay any outstanding balance, and may not reapply to the program before paying any outstanding balance.

Leaves of Absence

Students may request a leave of absence for reasonable cause. All approved leaves will be for a full academic year, although students are permitted to return from leave earlier. Requests must be in writing and must be approved by the UWW Director. Requests for a leave during a student's first year will be granted only in the case of a grave personal or family issue. Students who have been on leave may submit a written request for an extension of their leave for up to a second academic year; such extended leaves must also be approved by the UWW Director. No leaves will be extended beyond two academic years, and a student's total time on leave (while matriculated at UWW) may not exceed two academic years.

Although leaves may be approved during an academic semester, students are still liable for program fees for that semester if the request for leave was placed after the "add/drop" period for that semester.

There is a \$250 fee for any leave of absence and a \$250 fee for any extension of a leave of absence.

At the end of an approved leave period, students must resume their academic work. Students who neither resume academic work, nor request (and receive) an extension of their leave of absence, will be withdrawn from the program. Students who wish to maintain their matriculation at UWW, but will not enroll for new coursework during a semester, may register as a "continuing student" at a fee of \$1,000 per semester. A student may only maintain "continuing" status for one semester.

UWW will not accept for credit any academic work undertaken or completed by any student while on leave. This includes completion of coursework, preparation of a degree plan and final project description, or completion of a final project.

Resources

All UWW students will be assigned a Skidmore username and password and a Skidmore email account. Students are required to use this account in online classes and when communicating with their instructors or the UWW office. UWW students agree to abide by the rules found in the “Code of Ethics for Computing at Skidmore College,” found at <http://www2.skidmore.edu/cits/policies/use-rules.cfm>. Violations of these rules may result in the revocation of computer use privileges and/or referral to the appropriate judicial forum.

All UWW students have access to the electronic resources for the Lucy Scribner library and to the library’s electronic reserves. Those students living near the Skidmore campus may visit the library in person and take out books, and they may request books through the interlibrary loan program. Students living at a distance may request that books from the Skidmore library collection be shipped to them, but they are strongly urged to request books through interlibrary loan at their local library because of the time required in processing requests and shipping.

UWW students living close to the campus have access to the Skidmore College gym and are welcomed at any student events on campus. Local students will be issued a parking permit for the campus.

UWW students are not entitled to health care through the student health service or the counseling center, cannot obtain student health insurance through Skidmore College, and are not eligible for on-campus housing.

III. The UWW Academic Program

Advising

Each student in the UWW program has two advisors, an Academic Advisor from the UWW office who operates as a generalist, overseeing all aspects of the student’s program and serving as the student’s first point of contact with the program, and a Faculty Advisor, overseeing the construction of the student’s focus. (See definition of “focus” under “degree requirements,” below.) In some cases, the UWW office may delay appointing a Faculty Advisor until the direction of the student’s focus is clear.

Degree requirements

Every student’s curriculum is individually designed in consultation with his or her advisors and approved by the UWW Committee. However, there are some requirements all programs have to meet:

1. Every curriculum must include 120 credits.

2. A Bachelor of Arts curriculum must include 90 credits in the liberal arts; a Bachelor of Science curriculum must include 60 credits in the liberal arts.
3. Every curriculum must include at least 24 credits at the advanced level. Experiential learning credit may be counted toward this requirement.
4. Every curriculum must include a 6-credit final project completed while matriculated in UWW.
5. Every curriculum must include 6 credits in course work (in addition to the final project) offered through Skidmore College while matriculated in UWW.
6. Every curriculum must include:
 - a. 12 credits in the humanities
 - b. 6 additional credits in courses with an historical perspective
 - c. 12 credits in the social sciences
 - d. 9 credits in mathematics or science, including a laboratory science.

Courses transferred from other institutions may be counted in partial or full satisfaction of these requirements. In rare cases, experiential learning may be counted in partial satisfaction of these requirements with the approval of the student's advisors and the UWW Committee.

7. Every curriculum must include a focus of approximately 30 credits or more. A focus may be a traditional disciplinary major, e.g. English, Studio Art, an interdisciplinary major, e.g. Psychology/Sociology, Environmental Studies, East Asian Studies, or an individualized focus organized thematically. Every focus should include foundational studies, advanced work in areas within the focus, and appropriate exposure to the methodology of the disciplines involved.
8. Students must maintain a satisfactory average for all course work completed while matriculated at UWW.

Educational Options

Students may satisfy degree requirements in varied ways: online and correspondence courses, including UWW's online courses; independent studies with Skidmore faculty; online and classroom courses at accredited colleges including foreign colleges and universities; correspondence courses, independent studies with qualified faculty outside of Skidmore; internships; and self-directed studies. With their advisors' approval, students may discharge requirements through standardized examinations or examinations set through the UWW office. Advisors will help students to select, and must approve, the modes of study that suit their curricular needs.

Grades

Effective with the Spring 2008 semester, UWW moved from a system of narrative evaluations of student work to a traditional grading system. All students enrolled in a UWW course (online, on-campus, or independent study) will be assigned a letter grade unless they elect to take the course S/U. The criterion for a grade of S (satisfactory) is a C or better. Students may choose to take a course S/U if the option is offered by the instructor, and they must make the choice when registering for the course. After the add/drop deadline, it cannot be changed. Internships must be taken S/U. UWW students who enroll in courses at other institutions of higher learning have this choice only if it is offered by the other institution.

Letter grades include A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, and F.

A UWW instructor or independent study supervisor can limit his or her course/independent study to letter grades or to S/U with the consent of the UWW Director.

Students who withdraw from a UWW course before the add/drop deadline will have no record of the course on their transcript, nor will the course be considered a part of their enrollment for the semester, and hence the basis on which they will be charged. Students who have not withdrawn before this deadline and have not completed the course or arranged with their instructor for an incomplete (I) will receive a grade of W. Students will remain liable for the financial costs associated with such a course.

Students who have not completed a UWW course by the end of a semester and who have arranged with their instructor to complete the course at a later time may be assigned an Incomplete (I). If the course is not completed and a grade entered by the end of the following semester, the (I) will revert to a W. This deadline may be extended by the instructor with the approval of the UWW Director for no longer than one additional academic term. Students who take an incomplete in a course at another institution must comply with the regulations regarding incompletes at that institution.

Final projects will be assigned a grade of “pass with distinction”, “pass”, or “fail”. “Pass” is defined as a C or better. (See “Final Project”)

Students who have received a grade in a course taken at another institution while matriculated at UWW will have that grade recorded on their transcript regardless of whether or not the institution follows UWW grading policies.

Grade Point Average

Grade point averages are not recorded for UWW students.

Final Project

Every student is expected to complete a capstone 6-credit piece of independent work under the direction of his or her Faculty and Academic Advisors. Final projects include but are not limited to: theses, art shows, dance, music, or theatrical performances, videos, business or marketing plans, school or group development curricula. The student's proposed final project should be approved by the UWW Committee by the end of the semester in which the student is registered in the final project course. Approval of a student's final project proposal by the UWW Committee must be granted before a final project can be assessed. All final projects are read by two assessors. Assessors may include members of the Skidmore faculty, other qualified scholars, and qualified professionals. The student's Faculty Advisor will be one of the assessors. The other assessor will be chosen by the Academic Advisor.

The final project must be given a minimum grade of "Pass" by each assessor. The Faculty Advisor will, in addition, determine whether a project should be awarded a "Pass with Distinction".

Final projects are expected to be completed within one academic year from the date of enrollment in the final project course.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Students who fail to maintain a satisfactory average or who fail to complete six credits in a calendar, or who fail to complete their approved final project within one academic year may be withdrawn from the program at the discretion of the Director. Students receiving financial aid must maintain satisfactory academic progress as stipulated in the federal financial aid policies.

Degree Plan Meeting

Each student curriculum (degree plan) and final project description must be approved by the UWW Committee. Once approved, the curriculum and final project description set the contractual graduation requirements for the student. The curricular plan that students follow prior to approval of the Committee is based on the UWW's best sense/evaluation of the degree requirements for the student's chosen focus area.

In most cases, the student's curriculum and description of the proposed project is brought to the Committee by the student's Academic Advisor with written comments from both advisors in the semester preceding the student's anticipated date of completion. Students are responsible for getting materials for this meeting to their advisors in a timely manner.

Each student's curriculum and final project description are reviewed by the UWW academic staff before they are submitted to the UWW Committee for approval. No curriculum or final project description will be submitted to the UWW Committee without the approval of the student's Faculty Advisor and the UWW Director. Students should realize that this is often an iterative process in which multiple rounds of revision may be

necessary before a degree plan/final project proposal are sufficiently complete to be presented to the UWW Committee.

Students who are withdrawn from the UWW program after the approval of their degree plan and proposed final project and later re-enroll must resubmit these materials to the UWW Committee for approval.

Honors

UWW students are not eligible for department or college honors, Phi Beta Kappa, or the Periclean society. They are not listed on the Dean's list. Some discipline-specific honor societies do accept UWW students, and they are eligible for some academic prizes. Interested students should inquire to the appropriate academic college department.

IV. Finances

Students matriculated in UWW are required to pay a \$1,000 deposit in advance of each semester (Fall, Spring) in which they enroll. They are billed for the balance based on their "student status" at the add/drop date. Current rates and explanations of student status categories follow:

Student Status	Explanation (Fees are for the 2008-09 Academic Year)
Full time	Students registered for 12 semester hours or more (but no more than 18 semester hours) <u>Fee is \$6,300 per semester.</u>
3/4 time	Students registered for 9-11 semester hours. <u>Fee is \$5,400 per semester.</u>
½ time	Students registered for 6-8 semester hours. <u>Fee is \$4,500 per semester</u>
Less than half-time	Students registered for 1-5 credits <u>Fee is \$3,500 per semester</u>
Sustaining	Students who have <u>registered</u> for the Final Project in a prior semester, who are actively engaged in <u>completing</u> this Final Project, and who are not registered for any other credit – bearing courses this semester. Students will typically be in this classification for one semester at most. <u>Fee is \$1,000 per semester.</u>
Continuing	Students who are enrolled but are not registered for any courses in the current term, may be completing a course from a previous term, and/or may be in discussion with

advisors regarding the final project. These students are not yet ready to register for the Final Project. Students may be in this classification for only one semester.

Many other institutions call this a “matriculation fee”.

Fee is \$1,000 per semester.

Leave of Absence

Students may request a leave of absence for any number of personal, medical and other reasons. These will only be granted with the Director’s approval, and for a limited amount of time. Students themselves must initiate any request for leave.

Being on leave implies that no real work is being done!

(This includes online or on-campus work at Skidmore or elsewhere, completion of incompletes, preparation for degree plans, etc.) Students themselves must initiate any request for leave.

Fee is \$250.

Courses taken during the Summer Semester are billed to students at a rate of \$500/credit hour.

Only courses begun in a semester will be counted toward the student’s status for that semester. Final projects will be charged to the semester in which they are begun. They may be charged as 6 credits in one semester or as 3 credits in each of two consecutive semesters.

All coursework undertaken by the student will be counted toward the student’s status regardless of the sponsoring institution. Students who take courses through other institutions of higher education will be reimbursed \$250/credit with a maximum of \$750 for any one course. There are semester caps on such reimbursement, as follow: \$750 per semester for “Less than Half-Time”, \$1,500 for “Half-Time”, \$2,250 for “Three-Quarter Time” and \$3,000 for “Full Time” students. The student will be responsible for amounts in excess of these caps.

All independent studies and internships are appointed and paid through the UWW office.

Incoming students who are not recipients of financial aid must pay full tuition for their first semester at the time of enrollment. Returning students are required to pay a \$1,000 deposit prior to enrollment for the Fall or Spring semester. Financial aid students must have all paperwork completed and submitted and are required to pay \$350 at the time of enrollment.

A Note on “Continuing students” and “Sustaining students”

Continuing students are matriculated UWW students who have neither registered for courses, nor are on approved leave, for any particular semester. They will be billed a

“continuation fee” (similar to a “matriculation fee” billed by most educational institutions) for the semester. Students who have completed all coursework and whose final project credits have been charged to a previous semester will be considered as “sustaining” and charged a sustaining fee for each semester until the project is completed, submitted to the UWW, and positively evaluated by the assessors.

Late charges

Students whose accounts are 30 days overdue will be subject to late charges of 1.5% monthly. Students whose accounts are 60 days overdue may be subject to withdrawal.

Accounts in arrears

Students whose accounts are in arrears will be blocked from course registration until their accounts are settled.

Changes of status and refunds

Since faculty and staff salary commitments must be made in advance, and many operational expenses are fixed, UWW cannot permit changes of student status or grant any refunds after the add/drop deadline each semester.