Reducing dept.

MIT's undergraduate program, and undergraduate education in general, should be designed to provide students with a broadly-based preparation for life. The MIT curriculum tries to assure breadth of education by requiring various core, science distribution, and humanities and social science courses.

The aims of undergraduate education cannot be met, however, if departmental requirements impede a student's ability to sample the range of offerings at MIT. While no such obstruction should occur under the current rules, actual departmental approaches often encourage sophomores and even freshmen to take departmental requirements rather than electives.

The Pace and Programs Subcommittee of the Committee on Educational Policy has therefore recommended that the faculty rules be rewritten to limit explicitly the number of subjects that can be required by departments. Acceptance of this recommendation would significantly aid the Institute's efforts to reduce the pace of life at MIT.

MIT's varied requirements fulfill different purposes. Freshmen requirements are designed to provide newcomers with a basic grounding in the sciences. Sophomore year should be a time devoted to strengthening this base with science distributions, and to explore the entire range of possible majors. Only in the last two years should students turn their attention to their majors.

This scheme is not followed in practice, however. Most students forfeit the opportunity to investigate a wide range of majors during sophomore year by declaring their intentions at the requirements stage. As a means of reducing pace, without diluting quality, departmental requirements should be accepted in the spirit in which it was intended: as a means of reducing pace without diluting quality. This charge should be dismissed. Undergraduates are not supposed to be specialists, and no 'employer or graduate school will consider them as such.

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