

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Wheaton College Science Station (Black Hills, South Dakota)

1. College-Wide Essential Elements

As determined by College

2. Expected level of academic performance at Wheaton College Science Station (WCSS)

1. *As stated in the College-wide essential elements, all participants must be in good academic standing. Exceptions must include consent of Registrar and Office of Student Development.*

2. *Academic learning at Wheaton College Science Station includes a mix of classroom lectures and outdoor lab studies. Students typically collect natural materials and/or record observations in the field. The amount of time in the classroom vs. outdoors varies from course to course and day to day. A reasonable proportion of time in the field for all courses probably ranges from 50% to 75%.*

3. *Academic rigor compares with on-campus courses. Students take one course at a time. Courses are 2-6 weeks in length, with one credit hour earned per week of classes. Classes meet every weekday from about 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, unless field trips dictate a different schedule. The exception, ASTR 301 meets during every weekday afternoon and late evening-early morning (observation time).*

4. *Accommodations will be made for students requiring extra time and special accommodations to complete exams or assignments as documented with the Office of Student Development.*

5. *Textbook and supply lists in will be available in advance of the start of courses.*

3. Student adaptability necessary for successful participation at WCSS

1. *Students must be adaptable to living in a camp setting, with much time spent outdoors. Typical high/ low daily temperatures (°F): May 71°/42°, June 81°/50°, July 89°/57°. Late May and early June may be rainy and cool. Mid June and July are typically dry and hot.*

2. *Housing is rustic; gender separated dorms consist of rooms shared by four to six students with bunk beds and a general shower room. There is no air conditioning in the dorms. Students are responsible for housekeeping in dorms and public areas.*

3. *The campus and field-learning environment includes potentially hazardous plants (poison ivy) and animals such as insects, snakes, bats and other wild mammals. The Black Hills are a habitat for mountain lions, but sightings are rare. For this and other reasons of safety, students are expected to use the buddy system when hiking off-campus and use flashlights at night.*

4. *Students are expected to be ready for the start of each class, as stated in the syllabus or announced by the instructor and must follow directions for field activities such as meeting times to return to vehicles during field trips.*

5. *Depending on the course, students will participate in frequent rigorous hikes (daily for many courses), short to long duration over-night camping trips to remote locations, or late-night astronomical observations.*

6. Students are expected to work together as a team on field excursions with duties such as packing and meal preparation/clean up, setting up tents and cleaning vehicles.

7. Students are expected to adapt to an environment where mobile phone and Internet communications are less dependable than on the Wheaton campus. Most mobile phone services work from WCSS property, but not from all remote field locations. Wireless Internet is available on station, but there is narrow bandwidth and slow speeds. Wireless Internet at WCSS is not provided for entertainment purposes.

8. Students may choose to earn modest income as part-time kitchen helpers (setting tables, serving food, cleanup, dish washing). We depend on student helpers for this work that does not interfere with class activities.

9. Students are expected to participate in weekly vespers services (WCSS chapel) on Sunday evenings.

10. A student handbook with WCSS policies will be provided at the student information night and must be read before the start of classes.

4. Meal Service at WCSS

1. Students will eat most meals in the dining hall prepared by our kitchen staff. Students will also prepare "pack lunches" of provided food for sandwiches, fruit and snacks for daylong field trips away from campus. Overnight camping trips will involve students preparing their own meals with food provided by kitchen. Communal meals are an essential element of the program.

2. Meals typically include meat, but vegetarian options can be prepared upon request. We will accommodate individuals with documented food restrictions or requirements for medical reasons only. We will not accommodate individual food preferences (non-medical restrictions or requirements).

3. Water, fruit, and healthy snacks are available between meals. Students are asked to limit food kept in the dorms to well-wrapped or sealed snacks foods to prevent insect and rodent infestations.

4. There are no facilities for student to prepare their own food. Access to food beyond the campus is severely limited, requiring vehicular transportation of at least 12 miles.

5. The dining facility will make an effort to minimize exposure if a student has a known food allergy, however we cannot guarantee an environment completely free of allergens. Students with food allergies should be aware that closest emergency medical facilities are 12 miles from WCSS and often very much farther from remote field locations.

6. Based upon annual program evaluations, students are typically satisfied with food service at WCSS. The Head Cook will welcome reasonable suggestions for menus that can be prepared economically and would likely appeal to the greater community.

5. Physical capacity or conditioning necessary for successful participation

1. *WCSS is a camp-like setting at about 4400 ft. above sea level, with uneven ground, elevation differences, and few paved walkways. Students must be able to walk on grass, dirt or gravel trails between buildings. The distance between the men's dorm and the dining hall is about 600 feet (essentially flat). The distance between the women's dorm and the dining hall is about 660 feet (33 ft elevation difference along gravel road).*

2. *Courses include frequent (for some courses daily) rigorous hikes of several miles on uneven trails, often with steep gradients (from 3000 to 6000 ft above sea level). Students must be able to keep with the average pace of other students and instructor. Some activities involve wading in water or jumping narrow streams. Students are responsible for keeping hydrated and protected from the sun.*

3. *Students who experience travel sickness should be aware of that travel to remote locations for field studies involve vehicular transport on curvy, mountainous roads.*

4. *Students in some classes will be expected to camp, using sleeping bags and pads on the ground in tents. Trips in GEOL 201, BIOL 242 and BIOL 314 are generally one-night duration (one to two trips per course). Trips in BIOL 243 and GEOL 413 are weeklong and include high-elevation settings and extreme temperature conditions (below freezing at night).*

8. Mental/emotional health requirements

1. *Emotional stressors from the academic experience at WCSS are probably not too different for most students from their experiences on the Wheaton campus. However, many students find that taking one course at a time and in a field setting is a very enjoyable and less stressful. On the other hand, the courses compress a semester's worth of content into four weeks (or a quad into two weeks). Assignments and readings must be completed quickly, along with the physical demands of fieldwork.*

2. *Being that the WCSS campus is small and rustic, students live and work in very close proximity. The lack of privacy may be a stressor for some students. There are no single student accommodations available.*

9. Describe the accessibility of health care providers near WCSS

1. *There is limited access to medical and/or mental health care providers, especially from remote field locations. Medical facilities closest to WCSS include walk-in clinics and the Rapid City Regional Hospital (25 minutes, 12.6 miles). Rural emergency services are available in the vicinity of WCSS for transport to the Rapid City Regional Hospital emergency room. Smaller clinics and hospitals are located closer to some remote field sites. Emergency medical facilities are rarely close to field locations on the BIOL 243 and GEOL 413 "western trips" to Wyoming and Montana. Helicopter rescue is required from some locations.*

2. *Medication prescriptions can be filled at local stores of national pharmacy companies (such as CVS, Walgreens). First aid supplies are available on station and in vehicles. There is an AED (automated external defibrillator) available on station.*