

This document contains frequently asked questions about our 2020-21 plans, particularly as they pertain to the College's COVID-19 planning.

You may submit general questions to the Prof. Soni (asoni1@swarthmore.edu). Please check to see if someone has already submitted your question. Please talk to your course advisor about questions specific to your study plan.

We will post answers here as we collect new information.

Course Offerings

What changes have been made in terms of what is being offered in the Fall?

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Which CS classes will be offered in the J-semester? Will this be reconsidered?

For seniors, what will the support look like for the comprehensive poster? Will this be moved to the spring when we're on campus?

Will CPSC 35 be offered in the spring if students get lotteried out this fall since class sizes will be smaller?

The reason I registered for CPSC 31 was that CPSC 35 did not fit in my schedule.

Will there be more sections of CPSC 35?

Course Design/Remote Teaching

Will any of the courses be offered in a hybrid model for students on campus or will all courses be fully online?

How will lab assignments, office hours, ninja sessions, and partnered labs adjust to remote learning?

How will Ninja sessions be replicated?

Will classes be offered synchronously, then made available asynchronously if necessary?

Does the department plan to have any accommodations for students living across multiple time zones (e.g. asynchronous options to watch videos, office hours in the morning/evening EST, etc.)?

Will professors be flexible with late days when things break, home internet or power goes out, the software doesn't run, etc.?

Course Registration and Planning

What enrollment size will courses be limited to?

Do the course caps affect those with special majors involving computer science?

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Course Offerings

What changes have been made in terms of what is being offered in the Fall?

We have dropped: CPSC 31, CPSC 21 (Section 3)

We have added: CPSC 43 Networks (Group 2), CPSC 63 Artificial Intelligence (Group 3). Extra lab(s) for CPSC 21, 35, and 44.

Other changes, which can be found in the [Course Schedule](#):

CPSC 21: Prof. Wicentowski has replaced Prof. Soni as an instructor (Section 1). Students from Section 3 have been moved to Section 1. We have moved CPSC 21 to TR times (Sect. 1 9:45am-11:00am, Sect 2 2:00pm-3:15pm). All labs have been moved to Wednesday (please see updated course listings once they are approved for specifics).

CPSC 35: 2 extra labs have been added for Friday morning/afternoon.

CPSC 44: Prof. Soni will join Prof. Newhall in teaching the course. An extra lab has been added.

CPSC 65: Prof. Caplan has replaced Prof. Wicentowski as the instructor. The lecture has moved to 2:00 pm - 3:15 pm TR. Labs are Wednesday afternoon 1:15 pm - 2:45 pm and 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm.

What will be offered in the Spring semester?

These are tentative plans, which are subject to change.

We have dropped CPSC 35. CPSC 21 will have two sections (our assumption is that it will be similar in structure to the Fall offerings).

Courses we plan to offer:

CPSC 21 (2 sections)

CPSC 31 (2 sections)

CPSC 46 (Group 1)

CPSC 66 (Group 3, 2 sections)

CPSC 71 (Group 3)

CPSC 75 (Group 2)

Which CS classes will be offered in the J-semester? Will this be reconsidered?

The department considered several options and ultimately chose not to offer any J-term courses. We judged that it is not a format suitable for the courses we teach in our discipline. Of the options considered for the J-term, each was worse than the option of offering that course in the Fall or Spring. Many other lab disciplines have also come to this conclusion.

The only option still under consideration is to move the Senior Capstone course (CPSC 99) to the J-term if our waiver to remove this requirement is not approved.

For seniors, what will the support look like for the comprehensive poster? Will this be moved to the spring when we're on campus?

We are currently seeking permission to waive the Senior Capstone Experience. If that is not approved, we will be designing a different experience. We will also consider moving the comprehensive to the J-term to accommodate seniors enrolling for only one term. Any modifications will only apply to this year's senior comprehensive.

Will CPSC 35 be offered in the spring if students get lotteried out this fall since class sizes will be smaller?

The reason I registered for CPSC 31 was that CPSC 35 did not fit in my schedule. Will there be more sections of CPSC 35?

We believe the enrollment cap is high enough that we will service all students who need to take CPSC 35 this semester, but we are paying close attention to the situation and will provide guidance as we learn more about student enrollments. All students who preregistered for CPSC 31 instead of CPSC 35 should consider registering for CPSC 35 when registration (add/drop, or alternative to be determined) begins.

Course Design/Remote Teaching

Will any of the courses be offered in a hybrid model for students on campus or will all courses be fully online?

All of our courses will be delivered in **Remote** format. Our classes are quite large, making social distancing guidelines quite difficult to implement in our standard classrooms. This also reflects the individual health concerns of our faculty and staff. Some instructors plan on offering office hours or small group interactions in person, but this will not be part of regular class meetings and will be announced on a per-instructor basis.

How will lab assignments, office hours, ninja sessions, and partnered labs adjust to remote learning?

We understand that there were difficulties with the sudden switch to remote learning in the Spring. Adjusting our practices to better support our students is the primary focus of our planning for the Fall semester. This includes updating our approach to ninja sessions, labs, and office hours in response to student feedback. We are researching best practices and doing many rounds of testing and revision. The process is ongoing and will evolve over the next few weeks. While there is a great deal of coordination in the department, the implementation will vary by course. Here are some general principles:

- new practices are needed to foster active participation in lectures
- lab content and delivery will adjust to the constraints of remote learning
- there is a strong desire to return to paired programming for the intermediate and upper-level courses
- there will be fewer students per lab to increase the time available for each student

- many of our courses have increased staffing to provide more support and more flexible office hours
- Ninja sessions are being redesigned in terms of both hours and protocols
- answers to these questions will vary by course - what works best for CPSC 21 may look different than what works best for CPSC 35 and upper-level courses.

How will Ninja sessions be replicated?

Our faculty and instructional staff are working very hard on designing a remote learning experience that can support our students. We are working on training and technology support, as well as different formats and hours to accommodate various needs for this year. See [this question](#) for related information.

Will classes be offered synchronously, then made available asynchronously if necessary?

Does the department plan to have any accommodations for students living across multiple time zones (e.g. asynchronous options to watch videos, office hours in the morning/evening EST, etc.)?

UPDATE: please see [this document](#)

See the discussion on [labs and office hours](#) for related information. We acknowledge that this is a difficult situation for many, as there are external factors that are difficult for students to control, including living in very different time zones. This is also the case with faculty, as they face their own constraints this year (e.g., closed daycares and hybrid K-12 schooling). Our department fully understands that we need to be flexible where possible, but what that means is going to vary from one instructor to the next. We plan to release information for our courses in advance of the semester beginning. That being said, most of our courses will consist of synchronous activities. You should contact your instructor to come to an understanding before the semester; do not make assumptions on what will/will not be accommodated.

Will professors be flexible with late days when things break, home internet or power goes out, the software doesn't run, etc.?

UPDATE: please see [this document](#)

See related discussions on the flexibility [here](#) and [here](#). We are aware that available resources are not the same off-campus as they are on campus. While our collective understanding and

preparation for a remote semester has improved relative to the Spring 2020 semester, we cannot anticipate every difficulty students may face. We are working to incorporate flexibility in our policies and to be responsive to students. While we do not have specifics at this time, we believe that our department has always worked hard to be responsive to our students' needs and we plan to lean into that ethic. We plan to make our expectations clear on our syllabi and to publish these in advance of the semester.

Course Registration and Planning

What enrollment size will courses be limited to?

We are committed to providing a high-quality learning experience in the Fall. To accomplish this in a remote format, course sizes will need to be smaller than the same course taught prior to the pandemic. Students can find course enrollment caps in the [course schedule](#).

Do the course caps affect those with special majors involving computer science?

Special majors will be treated the same as majors/minors; they will be eligible for courses that are required according to their special major plan.

For students who intend to major in CS, and have taken 21 and 35 already, what course is recommended to take this fall in place of 31? Is there one? What are sophomores who have taken 21 and 35 supposed to do? Take a semester off from CS?

Students are permitted to take one upper-level Group 1 or Group 3 course before taking CPSC 31. This semester, students who have already taken 21 and 35 may take an upper-level course. Available courses include CPSC 41, 63, and 65. In addition, students can look to fulfill the math requirements for the major/minor, as well as their general college distribution requirements.

Will there be any changes to the way lotteries are handled?

The lottery will prioritize enrolling students in the courses they need to graduate. This isn't a departure from the way our lotteries usually work, but we will be dealing with additional constraints on our class sizes. This will require enforcing a hard cap on courses: students will not be eligible for courses after meeting the major/minor requirements e.g., eight CPSC courses for the major. This will also tend to prioritize seniors who have not completed their requirements over other class years.

***How can we register in new courses (CPSC 63 Artificial Intelligence and CPSC 43 Networks) [or make changes to existing pre-registration]
As a Computer Science major, I am currently enrolled in another class and do not want to lose my spot in that class unless I know I will be enrolled in AI. How do we change registrations?***

The Registrar has opened a brief, CS-only registration period for July 30 - August 5. All students must re-select their courses (except for CPSC 35)

[Upper-level CPSC Registration Instructions](#)

[CPSC 35 Registration Instructions](#)

[CPSC 21 Registration Instructions](#) (only students who pre-registered for CPSC 21 in the Spring may use this form).

Will computer science accept transfer credit from reputable institutions as per the past policy?

Will the department accept transfer credit if I take online classes at other institutions during my leave of absence, as long as I get it pre-approved?

UPDATE: please see the college policy on [transfer credits for Fall 2020](#). Contact [Prof. Wicentowski](#) to seek pre-approval and guidance.

We are awaiting guidance from the Committee on Education Policy and Provost's Office on this question. We will update students when this information is made available to us.

I'll be taking CPSC 35 in the Fall. Can I take an upper-level course since I cannot take CPSC 31?

Will CPSC 31 be dropped as a prerequisite for courses in the Fall or Spring?

Course prerequisites have not changed, nor do we anticipate doing so; CPSC 35 will remain a strict prerequisite for all upper-level courses. Courses requiring CPSC 31 (Group 2 courses plus CPSC 40) will still require CPSC 31.

As a senior, can I take a ninth cs course in the spring even if it's not required for my major?

Based on our current projections, it is unlikely that we will be able to admit students into upper-level courses once they meet their CS requirements this year. Note that the cap, as in the past, only applies to courses taught by faculty in the Computer Science Department and not to cross-listed courses taught in other departments or directed readings. We want to stress that these limits are strictly a function of how many students we can effectively teach in a given year. None of us want to prevent students - majors, non-majors, first-years, seniors, etc. - from taking CS courses. But the reality is that the number of courses students want to enroll in will vastly exceed the number we can teach this year.

Major/Minor Planning

How will sophomores who plan to major in CS be affected by the changes in CPSC 31 and CPSC 35?

Sophomores should plan on taking CPSC 35 in the Fall and CPSC 31 in the Spring to stay on track for the major. We are working to get students at least one of these two courses this year. This will leave sophomores with, at most, one of CPSC31/35 to be taken in the Fall of their junior year.

How will students apply for a CS major or minor?

The procedure for this has not changed. Students apply during Sophomore Planning in the Spring semester. Juniors and Seniors can make change requests through the Dean's Office. All new requests will be deferred through the Fall term. Unfortunately, it is very unlikely that add

requests (e.g., new major, new minor, or minor-to-major upgrade) will be accepted for this year's senior class.

Miscellaneous

Will on-campus CS students be able to access the school's labs in some capacity?

We currently do not have a protocol for lab rooms; we are working with various members of the College on determining the availability of various labs to students on campus. They will not be used as part of lecture or lab meetings. Students, of course, will be able to access our machines remotely.

Can Ninjas work if they aren't on campus?

If students are enrolled for the term, they can be hired as student employees independent of whether they live on campus or not. However, the College has unequivocally stated that students cannot be hired as Ninjas (or graders) if they take a leave of absence for the semester.