

QUEEN'S SCHOOL OF COMPUTING – YOUR GUIDE TO 1ST YEAR

WHAT DO I NEED TO TAKE IN MY FIRST YEAR?

1st year students are undifferentiated for their first two terms (Fall and Winter); they select their plan at the end of their second term, usually in mid-May. Typically, this is what 1st year looks like for a student who wants to qualify for Computing in their 2nd year:

If you have prior coding experience...	If you are new to coding...
Fall CISC 121 MATH 121A (or MATH 123) MATH 112 CISC 102 Elective	Fall CISC 101 (our entry-level intro to programming) MATH 121A (or MATH 123) MATH 112 CISC 102 Elective
Winter CISC 124 MATH 121B (or MATH 124) MATH 212 (optional) or an elective Elective Elective	Winter CISC 121 MATH 121B (or MATH 124) MATH 212 (optional) or an elective Elective Elective
Summer No courses	Summer CISC 124 (subject to availability)
Fall (2nd year) Focus on your core 2 nd year courses for your plan.	Fall (2nd year) CISC 124 if you didn't take it over the Summer. Focus on your core 2 nd year courses for your plan. With this path, some courses may be delayed to the Winter term until you complete CISC 124 as it is a prerequisite.

If you are planning on taking any specialization, there are other first year courses that you will need to take. Have a look through your intended plan on the [Academic Calendar](#) for details about this.

SHOULD I START WITH CISC 101 OR CISC 121?

CISC 101 is the best choice for students who have little to no programming/coding experience. CISC 121 is for students who have some previous experience or fundamental understanding of the subject matter. We cannot make the 101/121 decision for you – it totally depends on your background and your abilities.

If in doubt, it is a good idea to start with CISC 101. Students often overestimate their programming proficiency, only to end up struggling in CISC 121 and/or CISC 124. In fact, it is likely to put you in a better position to meet our acceptance thresholds when it comes to selecting plans at the end of your first year. Rest assured, starting with CISC 101 does not put you at a disadvantage and/or prevent you from graduating in 4 years.

The only caution with regards to starting with CISC 101 is that **you will only have the one opportunity – CISC 121 in the Winter term – to get a B or better.** This is essential to qualify for automatic acceptance into your plan in May.

CISC 121 READINESS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Here is a link to a [CISC 121 Readiness Self-Assessment](#) that will help you determine if you should be in CISC 101 or CISC 121. The link takes you to a copy of a sample first assignment given in CISC 121. If you are ready for CISC 121, you will look at this assignment and be able to figure out how you would approach the problem and code it in whatever language that you currently know. If you can do this and are comfortable with a task like this, then you are ready for CISC 121. If not, you should consider starting in CISC 101. Please note that it isn't important that you come up with an exact, correct answer (and we won't be providing one so please don't ask) – it is enough that you are able to use programming concepts and craft a solution.

****IMPORTANT**** - PLAN SELECTION GOING INTO 2ND YEAR

It is very important to note that you *must* meet minimum entry requirements going into your 2nd year to qualify for automatic acceptance into your chosen Computing plan. It may not be as easy to get into a Computing plan as it is through the automatic acceptance process going into your 2nd year. After this, there is no more automatic acceptance, and you will compete with other students to get in. To qualify for most of our Honours plans automatically, our current thresholds require:

- 1) a B or higher in either CISC 121 or CISC 124, and
- 2) a cumulative GPA of 2.6 or better.

These thresholds may change from one year to the next. Please see <https://www.queensu.ca/artsci/sites/faswww/files/Computing.pdf> for the most current requirements.

You *may* still be accepted into your chosen plan via our pending list, but this is a competitive process. You will still need to get into a “Plan B” plan in the meantime so that you can enroll in your courses in July.

Once you have completed 24.0 or more units (the equivalent of 8 courses), you will be *required* to select a plan for which you qualify. If you don't qualify for your intended Computing plan (as outlined above), you will need to choose another plan, in another discipline, for which you *do* qualify. **If you are not in a plan by the time course registration starts, you will not be able to enroll in your courses.** You must participate in this process through your SOLUS account during the plan selection period (mid-May through June); you will *not* be added to any plan by default.

If you have fewer than 24.0 units, you will still be considered a 1st year student in the system, and you do not need to select your plan yet. You will be able to enroll in your courses normally. You should take the upcoming year to ensure you will qualify for your chosen Computing plan the next Spring.

We offer advising and a webinar annually prior to plan selection to go over your options, and you will also receive notifications and reminders about all of this via email.

WHAT IF I'M NOT ACCEPTED INTO MY COMPUTING PLAN?

If this happens, it's not the end of the world. Although you won't have enrolment priority, and you can't take 3rd or 4th year Computing courses, you can still take 1st and 2nd year courses as needed (or repeat some of them if necessary) to boost your grades and your GPA. You can then reapply the next Spring.

Please visit our website for more information on our plans. <https://www.cs.queensu.ca/undergraduate/programs/>

WHAT MATH SHOULD A COMPUTING STUDENT TAKE?

Most Computing students take MATH-112/3.0 and MATH-121/6.0 in 1st year.

MATH-110/6.0 and MATH-120/6.0 are more challenging; we recommend them only for students who are considering doing the Computing, Mathematics, and Analytics Specialization (COMA), a Minor in MATH, or for those who really like mathematics.

MATH-126/6.0 is for students who didn't do 4U Math (or equivalent) in high school.

MATH-112/3.0 is an abbreviated version of the now discontinued MATH-111/6.0 course. The Math and Stats department considers MATH-112/3.0 plus MATH-212/3.0 together to be equivalent to MATH-111/6.0. You will only need to take MATH-112/3.0 to satisfy the 3.0-unit requirement for your plan.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

You can reach us for advising at advising@cs.queensu.ca. A few things to note...

- Please use your **Queen's email account** for security.
- Please include your **student number**.
- Please only send **one email per issue**; to reopen your ticket, reply to the last email response (do not change the subject line). This really helps us reduce inbox traffic and streamline our processes.
- We try to keep advising to email as much as possible as it creates a better record of our correspondence. Virtual meetings can be arranged if necessary, but please start by giving us a brief summary of your question or problem so we can triage you appropriately.
- Our busiest times are during add-drop in September and January, plan selection in May and June, and especially during course registration in the last two weeks of July. Your wait time will be longer during these periods, so reach out to us as soon as you have identified a problem.

Take a moment to bookmark the [Enrolment News](#) page. This is where we post all academic-related news or announcements, as well as details about upcoming events.