When should you take the DME series? 1st year versus 2nd year

We’ve received questions from many incoming students who are interested in the Design, Monitoring, & Evaluation series, but are unsure which year is best to start the series – your 1st year or 2nd year at Fletcher. This is a good question, and there are advantages and disadvantages to both. The decision will ultimately depend on each individual’s particular circumstances, but below are some points to consider during your decision-making process.

**Advantages of taking DME in your 1st year at Fletcher:**

- If you are interested in evaluation as a topic for your capstone, then taking the series during your first year at Fletcher would allow you to complete Advanced Evaluation (the third module) during Spring of your first year, leaving ample time to incorporate evaluation into your capstone. It also means you can enroll in the Evaluation Colloquium which is offered in the Fall semester and offers a deep dive into a topic of your choosing.
- If you want your summer internship to incorporate DME, it’s best to take the series in your first year; taking the coursework in advance of the summer internship will allow you to be more effective during your summer, and will make you a more competitive applicant for summer intern positions.
- At Fletcher each student is entitled to one semester of 4.5 credits, and three semesters of 4-credits. By taking DME during your first year, you can better plan your credit load and avoid any risk that you will “run out” of credits before taking the series if you were to wait until your second year.
- There are a number of other courses at Fletcher (e.g. Impact Evaluation) that are best done after taking this series. You have more flexibility in navigating this if you have the series completed in first year.
- If you are a 1-year MA student, it’s best to enroll in your first year since you won’t be around next year!

**Disadvantages of taking DME in your 1st year at Fletcher:**

- Due to the structure of the pre-semester course, the final assignment is completed over Orientation week. *This does not require missing Orientation entirely*, but some choices may need to be made to balance competing demands and interests.
- The fast pace of the class (i.e. large amount of readings and group work over a truncated period of time) can prove overwhelming to those who are not yet fully confident in their academic English. If English is not your native language, it may be advantageous to take a year of Fletcher coursework prior to starting the series in your second year.

**Advantages to waiting until your 2nd year at Fletcher:**

- You won’t miss any Orientation and the first week of classes will be less stressful because you won’t be completing the final assignment at the same time as choosing classes and settling back into school.
- If you have been out of school for a long time or are an ESL student, having a year of Fletcher coursework in advance of the course will make you more prepared for the intensive nature of the August and January modules, which both cover a lot of material in a truncated period of time.
- You will have had more time to explore other topics and may approach the series with a different lens.

**Disadvantages to waiting until your 2nd year at Fletcher:**
- You will have to wait until your fourth semester to complete Advanced Evaluation, which would preclude you from doing an evaluation-related capstone.
- You will not be able to take the DME Colloquium – which is a group independent study that does a deep dive into a specific topic of your choosing. This is only offered to those who have completed the DME series and occurs in the fall semester.
- The Advanced Evaluation module has a large assignment that occurs at the end of your final semester which is often in conflict with capstone deadlines and job applications.
- You will not have the DME coursework under your belt prior to embarking on your summer internship, which may make you less competitive for summer internships related to DM&E.
- You will have to plan your credit load over the two years at Fletcher more diligently if taking the series during your 2\textsuperscript{nd} year. Each student is entitled to one semester of 4.5 credits, and if you spend these all in your first year, you may not have enough remaining credits for the series your 2\textsuperscript{nd} year.

Still unsure? Contact the Teaching Assistant, Anna Jacobson, (anna.jacobson2@tufts.edu), or other current students to address any other questions or concerns.

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