Core’s “approaches to knowledge” courses introduced in the late 1970s and early 1980s. After entertaining ideas ranging from a sequence of required, broadly integrative courses to new points of focus on international studies and the sciences (see “Addition by Subtraction,” July-August 2004, page 55, and “Educating Undergraduates,” September-October 2004, page 61), the committee opted for simplicity above all—what Kirby characterized as choice, incentive, and opportunity, not requirements. If adopted, the new curriculum would feature:

- **Distribution.** Students would have to take three one-semester courses in each of arts and humanities, study of societies, and science and technology. Because their individual concentrations would fall in one of the areas, the requirement would in effect be fulfilled by six one-semester departmental offerings, or optional, year-long “Courses in General Education,” intended to be “synoptic and integrative in approach, and topically both wide-ranging and of considerable depth.” (Once several such courses are created, the report suggested, the faculty “may wish to consider some form of requirement from among this group.”)

- **Writing and speaking.** A first-year one-semester course in writing would still be required. Other courses would offer students “structured opportunities for honing their skills in oral expression as well as written.”

- **Foreign language.** Proficiency in a language other than English would still be mandated, but would no longer need to be fulfilled in the first year.

- **International experience.** All students would be “expected” to pursue “a significant international experience”—an expectation well on the way to being fulfilled (see sidebar opposite).

The committee guidelines reflect differences of opinion and uncertainties about how to make the recommendations work. Three important issues concern matters of content and of processes to assure that students emerge from Harvard broadly educated.

“[D]espite the obvious importance of these skills and areas of knowledge,” the report noted, a majority of the committee declined to require courses in moral and ethical reasoning, one of the pillars of the Core curriculum, or in quantitative analysis, a new field introduced in 1999 following the last FAS review of the Core. The committee members did “strongly recommend” that students take such courses—and that faculty offer them. (Some faculty members who spoke at a November 22 FAS meeting also expressed concern over letting go the Core’s foreign-cultures requirement, and its exposure to history, at a time when students are being encouraged to study abroad.)

Such recommendations to students suggest the crucial practical problems in assembling a suitable curriculum. “With...