

# **Core Curriculum Framework**

## **Updated December 14, 2011**

## **Updated February 6, 2023**

The following proposal is a formal statement of the new General Studies curriculum, now known as the Core Curriculum. This is a comprehensive document collecting the work of the General Studies Committee and all of its subcommittees. It is laid out in five sections.

Section I: Program Goals and Intended Student Outcomes

Section II: Definition of Competencies

Section III: The Basic Framework (At a Glance)

Section IV: Framework Expansion and Definitions

Section V: The Initial Framework/Course Mapping

## **Section I: Program Goals and Intended Student Outcomes**

### **Goal No. 1: Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**

- a) Acquire knowledge in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts through progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance
- b) Engage in both contemporary and enduring questions

### **Goal No. 2: Intellectual and Practical Skills throughout the Curriculum**

- a) Engage in inquiry and analysis
- b) Demonstrate abilities in critical and creative thinking
- c) Effectively communicate, in both oral and written English
- d) Acquire quantitative and information literacy
- e) Demonstrate a capacity for collaboration/teamwork and problem solving
- f) Integrate the foundations and the skills for lifelong learning and wellness

### **Goal No. 3: Personal and Social Responsibility**

- a) Develop civic knowledge and civic engagement
- b) Develop global understanding and respect for cultures and societies outside of the United States
- c) Demonstrate understanding of multiculturalism and sensitivity to issues of diversity
- d) Practice professional ethics and ethical reasoning

### **Goal No. 4: Integrative Learning**

- a) Demonstrate a synthesis of, and advanced accomplishment across, general and specialized studies through a capstone experience in the chosen discipline

**These Intended Student Outcomes will be achieved through many pathways and many choices within each requirement, including experiential learning, beginning with a first year experience and concluding with a capstone, integrated where possible within the major and assessed in accordance with LEAP goals.**

## Section II: Definition of Competencies

The following competencies were adopted from the LEAP plan, and are adopted with minor modifications from the report of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The General Studies Committee recommends these definitions as a way to measure each of the competencies. The rubrics are used to evaluate student learning, and may also be used to determine whether course objectives (intended learning outcomes) are in line with the competencies, and as such, may be used to satisfy core requirements. In looking at the rubrics, the committee believes that it would be feasible to assume that the benchmark, milestone, and capstone descriptors could represent course objectives for courses in the first tier through third tier, including capstone courses.

Further expansions of the definitions, as well as benchmarks and milestones, can be found on the website of the AAC&U at [www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org).

**Critical Thinking:** Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

**Creative Thinking:** Creative thinking is both the capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways and the experience of thinking, reacting, and working in an imaginative way characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and risk taking.

**Oral Communication:** Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

**Written Communication:** Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

**Quantitative Literacy:** Quantitative Literacy is a "habit of mind," competency, and comfort in working with numerical data. Individuals with strong Quantitative Literacy skills possess the ability to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations. They understand and can create sophisticated arguments supported by quantitative evidence and they can clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc., as appropriate).

**Information Literacy:** The ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand.

**Collaboration/Teamwork:** Collaboration and teamwork are behaviors under the control of individual team members (effort they put into team tasks, their manner of interacting with others on team, and the quantity and quality of contributions they make to team discussions.)

**Problem Solving:** Problem solving is the process of designing, evaluating and implementing a strategy to answer an open-ended question or achieve a desired goal.

**Lifelong Learning:** Lifelong learning is “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence”. An endeavor of higher education is to prepare students to be this type of learner by developing specific dispositions and skills described in this rubric while in school.

**Civic Knowledge and Engagement:** Civic engagement is "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes." In addition, civic engagement encompasses actions wherein individuals are encouraged to participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community.

**Global Understanding and Respect:** Global understanding and respect is the ability to understand the interconnectedness of peoples and systems, to have a general knowledge of history, world events, to accept and cope with the existence of different cultural values and attitudes, and to celebrate the richness and benefits of this diversity.

**Multiculturalism and Diversity:** Multiculturalism and diversity refers to the acquisition of a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.

**Ethical Practice and Ethical Reasoning:** Ethical Reasoning and Practice is reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Students’ ethical self-identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.

**Experiential Learning:** Incorporating active, participatory experiences to enhance learning, specifically the development of critical thinking and reflective judgment skills, and to teach students to be advocates and change agents.

**Wellness:** Wellness is a way of living that emphasizes such preventive measures as eating a healthy diet, making exercise an enjoyable part of your life, and making self-care decisions that will improve the quality of your life. The premise of wellness is that you can live a long, healthy (physically and mentally) and active life.

### Section III: The Basic Framework (At a Glance)

This section lists the various parts of the Core Curriculum framework and their credits. Core competencies from the Goals and ISOs document have been underlined.

1. These are areas in which courses are to be taken. Every area will have multiple courses that fulfill that area. It is expected that certain departments will fulfill each area better than others. However, any department is welcome to submit courses that they believe meet the criteria to the Core Curriculum committee for approval.
2. The minimum number of credits that must be taken is 42.
3. Specific majors may direct their students to take certain courses outside of their department in the Core Curriculum. For instance, a major program might require students to take a certain foreign language in Humanities.
4. Up to 8 credits of courses within the Core Curriculum can also be used to count towards both the Core Curriculum requirements **and** the requirements of a minor or a major. This is referred to as “course-sharing,” or may be more familiarly known as “double-dipping.”

**The First Tier (Initial Inquiry) – 21 credits.** Students may take first-tier courses at any time, but are strongly encouraged to take them in the first two years. First-tier courses should generally not have prerequisites, except as necessary given the student's previous academic background or because of course sequencing.

WRITTEN ENGLISH – 6 credits.

MATHEMATICS – 3 credits.

HISTORY – 3 credits.

SCIENCES – 8 credits.

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE – Minimum of 1 credit.

**The Second Tier (Expressions of Knowledge) – 21 credits.** Students are expected to take second-tier courses in the first three years, and these courses may have prerequisites.

ARTS – 3 credits.

HUMANITIES – 6 credits.

SOCIAL SCIENCES – 9 credits.

WELLNESS – 3 credits.

WRITING IN THE MAJOR – 3 credits. (This major course does not count towards the 21 credits of the Second Tier or the 42-credit minimum.)

**The Third Tier (Integrative Learning).** Students must have Senior standing to take this course.

CAPSTONE IN THE MAJOR – 1 to 12 credits. (This major course does not count towards the 42-credit minimum.)

## Section IV: Framework Expansion and Definitions

In Section IV, we will define each tier and area in greater detail.

### **The First Tier (Initial Inquiry) – 21 credits**

- Students are generally expected to take first-tier courses in their first two years.
- First-tier courses should generally not have prerequisites, except as necessary given the student's previous academic background or because of course sequencing.
- All courses in the first tier must address critical thinking and lifelong learning, in addition to the competencies listed for each area.

### **AREA 1: WRITTEN ENGLISH – 6 credits**

All courses in this area must address creative thinking and oral and written communication. All students must achieve a “C” or better in each of these courses.

Students in these courses will:

- render close textual analysis;
- synthesize information from multiple texts and/or sources;
- render clear, cogent ideas;
- structure well-developed essays, reports, and other types of writing, with thesis/hypothesis, textual support, and analysis;
- correctly employ standard written English usage;
- utilize technology to improve critical writing and thinking skills;
- become familiar with the writing, research, and documentation conventions in their fields of study.

### **AREA 2: MATHEMATICS – 3 credits**

All courses in this area must address creative thinking, quantitative literacy, and problem solving.

Mathematics is the knowledge of and confidence with basic mathematical/analytical concepts and operations required for problem-solving, decision-making, and real-world applications; this entails the ability to:

- perform basic computational/arithmetic operations;
- perform basic algebraic and/or logical operations that involve levels of abstraction, including use of words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc. as appropriate
- demonstrate basic problem-solving skills, applied and analytical skills;
- express abstract calculations and mathematical concepts as well as demonstrate skills at estimating and approximating results.

*(Definition revised from: Mount St. Mary's College)*

We recommend that each department collaborate with members from the Math faculty to:

- identify discipline-specific courses that include real-life application scenarios, or
- develop discipline-specific courses, as needed, which include real-life application scenarios.

### **AREA 3: HISTORY – 3 credits**

All courses in this area must address critical thinking and communication in written English.

Students in these courses will:

- understand chronology and the process of change over time;
- compare historical experience across time, place, and culture;\*
- understand historical developments in their political, cultural, social, and economic contexts; and understand the interconnectedness of these contexts;
- understand that the assessment of historical causation emanates from multiple perspectives—that there is no one “correct” explanation of change;
- evaluate primary sources as a key to understanding the past;
- understand the nature of contingency. \*\*

\*This would require a General Studies History course to focus on a substantial length of time—at least several decades. Courses that present a snapshot analysis of a single event or individual (for example, World War II or Napoleon) would not meet the standard.

\*\* The concept of contingency teaches us that historical outcomes are not predetermined but are dependent on a complex linkage of prior conditions—change a single one of these and any outcome could have turned out differently. This enables the student to escape the trap of a “presentist” approach, which views the past only through the lens of the present.

### **AREA 4: SCIENCES – 8 credits**

All courses in this area must address quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork and problem solving. The eight credits must be taken in two courses in a specified sequence.

The sciences (life, physical, earth and space, and environmental) encompass the knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes required for personal decision making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, economic productivity, and health. People who are scientifically literate can ask for, find, or determine answers to questions about everyday experiences. They are able to describe, explain, and predict natural phenomena. This entails the ability to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of science as an ongoing and ever-changing discipline;
- utilize the scientific method to formulate or identify investigable questions and hypotheses, plan investigations, and collect evidence;

- interpret evidence and draw conclusions, critiquing the trustworthiness of evidence and reflecting critically on information included and/or omitted from reports on scientific matters;
- understand the link between science and technology, including the use of technology for learning, research, and communicating findings; and
- demonstrate an understanding of the personal and social impacts of science and develop decision-making skills.

*(Definition revised from the National Science Education Standards - Welborn, V. & Kanar, B. 2000. Building Websites for Science Literacy. Issues in Science and Technology Librarianship. [Online]. Available: <http://www.isrl.org/00-winter/article2.html> [October 8, 2000].)*

### **AREA 5: FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE – Minimum of 1 credit**

All courses in this area must address wellness, information literacy and experiential learning.

The purpose of the First-Year Experience is to integrate students into the life and culture of Shepherd University and to prepare them with the foundations for academic success.



## **The Second Tier (Expressions of Knowledge) – 21 credits**

- Students are expected to take second-tier courses in the first three years.
- Second-tier courses may have prerequisites.
- All second-tier courses must address lifelong learning, in addition to the competencies listed for each area.
- Every course in the second tier (with the exception of Wellness and Writing in the Major) must address at least one of the following areas and be designated as such in the catalog: civic knowledge and engagement, global understanding and respect and multiculturalism and diversity. Every student will be required to have taken a course in each of these areas during his or her time at Shepherd.

### **AREA 1: ARTS – 3 credits**

All courses in this area must address creative thinking.

The Arts promote, inspire, and celebrate growth through creative expression. It encompasses a diverse range of human activities, creations, and media that enable us to understand and enjoy the experiences of our senses and to sharpen our aesthetic appreciation in both classic and contemporary artistic works. All courses in this area encourage a deeper appreciation for the arts, enhance understanding of artistic theory, or provide an experience in a specific medium or genre.

### **AREA 2: HUMANITIES – 6 credits**

Courses in Humanities are expected to meet one of the following competencies: civic knowledge and engagement, global understanding and respect or multiculturalism and diversity.

Humanities provides perspectives from a diverse variety of fields of study. Courses in this area should explore patterns of human knowledge, belief, and behavior. Examination of the shared attitudes, values, norms, and goals that characterize a people and/or a culture is a key component of courses listed in this category.

### **AREA 3: SOCIAL SCIENCES – 9 credits**

Courses in Social Sciences are expected to meet one of the following competencies: civic knowledge and engagement, global understanding and respect or multiculturalism and diversity.

Social Sciences fosters the understanding and appreciation of the importance of society and human behavior. Courses in this area explore factors including the individual, family, peers and a range of institutional structures. Students should gain an understanding of the complexity and the interconnectedness of individuals, groups, and social structures. Objective approaches and methods are employed from within each course's discipline.

#### **AREA 4: WELLNESS – 3 credits**

All courses in this area must address wellness.

Wellness is a way of living that emphasizes such preventive measures as eating a healthy diet, making exercise an enjoyable part of your life, and making self-care decisions that will improve the quality of your life. The premise of wellness is that you can live a long, healthy (physically and mentally) and active life. Wellness has many components, including but not limited to:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Intellectual
- Social
- Spiritual

This entails the ability to:

- identify and practice health-enhancing behaviors and reduce health risks to live safer, healthier lives;
- access, analyze, and evaluate health information, products and services in order to become health-literate consumers; and
- demonstrate awareness of environmental and safety hazards.

#### **AREA 5: WRITING IN THE MAJOR – 3 credits**

All courses in this area must address written communication.<sup>1</sup>

This major course does not count towards the 21 credits of the Second Tier or the 42-credit minimum and cannot be used for course-sharing. It should be identified as an existing course within each major field that is specifically designated as a writing-intensive course, the subject matter being the chosen major. A 3-credit, writing-intensive course in literature, rhetoric, or advanced composition may be substituted, if no course is available in the major to fulfill these requirements.

Writing-intensive courses view “writing as a mode of learning”—that is, they employ writing assignments as ways of helping students learn the material rather than as vehicles for regurgitating material. Moreover, instructional focus in such classes is on the course content as well as the writing process. They can accomplish this objective through either incorporating multiple smaller written assignments with detailed evaluation, feedback, and revision opportunities or highlighting multiple stages of the writing process (e.g., idea formulation, refinement of argument/hypothesis, structuring/outlining, drafting, revising) in relation to one lengthy written project.

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<sup>1</sup> The addition of this sentence was approved by the Core Curriculum Committee on November 17, 2021, and the Faculty Senate on February 6, 2023.

Characteristics of a writing course should include the following:

- They're small enough so that writing instruction (professor to student, among peers, students assessing their own work) can occur—ideally 18 – 20 students.
- They integrate writing in every phase of the class, and class time is explicitly dedicated to guiding students through the writing process.
- They see writing as recursive and reflective. Students should talk about their writing and all phases of their writing (brainstorming, drafting, revising) with each other and with their instructor. They should also read and respond to each other's work in class.
- They emphasize the writing process, including revision. The writing process (and each student might have his or her own process) should be made visible in the classroom and be a subject of discussion. That is to say, students shouldn't just appear in class on the due date with a paper they wrote completely outside of class with no previous discussion.
- They result in students having written no fewer than 30 pages, which includes all of the pages in all of the stages of the writing process (i.e., drafts, early versions, outlines, revisions).

### **The Third Tier (Integrative Learning)**

- Students must have Senior standing to take this course or courses.
- All third-tier courses must address lifelong learning.

### **CAPSTONE IN THE MAJOR – 1 to 12 credits**

Courses in this area must address oral communication, written communication, experiential learning and ethical practice. This major course does not count towards the 42-credit minimum and cannot be used for course-sharing. It is a culminating professional experience.

The majors have broad leeway to determine what a capstone course is and may substitute an experiential, study-abroad, or other co-curricular learning experience. Capstones may include one or more of the following elements:

- Independent study
- Exhibits
- Portfolios
- Co-operative assignments
- Internships
- Fieldwork
- Student teaching
- Clinical work
- Research projects
- Presentations

- Comprehensive examinations
- Oral or written reports
- Articles or publications
- Thesis

## **Section V: The Initial Framework/Course Mapping**

The General Studies committee will be accepting submissions from each department as to what courses should be considered to fulfill the requirements of each area. When the new program begins in the Fall of 2011, the existing General Studies courses will be **temporarily** used to fill each area of the Core Curriculum, while the General Studies committee evaluates new submissions.

Departments that house existing General Studies courses must re-apply to have those courses permanently considered as part of the Core Curriculum. Application and approval must take place within the first two years of the new Core Curriculum being put in place.

Departments are strongly encouraged to submit their candidates for First-Year Experience, Writing in the Major, and Capstone in the Major as soon as possible.

WRITTEN ENGLISH – 6 credits

- ENGL 100A & 100B **OR** ENGL 101
- ENGL 102/103/104

MATHEMATICS – 3 credits

- MATH 101A & 101B **OR** MATH 101
- MATH 105/108/154/155/205/314

HISTORY – 3 credits

- HIST 100/101/102/103/120/124/130

SCIENCES – 8 credits

- BIOL 101/102
- BIOL 208/209
- CHEM 101/101L/102/102L
- CHEM 120/120L/122/122L
- CHEM 207/207L/209/209L
- GSCI 101/102
- GSCI 103/104
- PHYS 201/201L/202/202L
- PHYS 221/221L/222/222L

ARTS – 3 credits

- MUSC 111
- THEA 204
- ART 103/104

HUMANITIES – 6 credits

- ENGL 204/208/209
- COMM 202
- PHIL 208
- HIST 201/202
- FREN 101/102/203/204
- GERM 101/102/203/204
- SPAN 101/102/203/204

SOCIAL SCIENCES – 9 credits

- ECON 123/205
- PSCI 100/101
- SOCI 203

WELLNESS – 3 credits

- GSPE 210

### Summary of Changes Since Last Version

1. Removed Communications from Tier I, added COMM 202 as an option in Tier II, put those three credits in Humanities.
2. Changed language in bullet point 3 to add bullet point 4 and make things more clear about course sharing.