**General Education Program Revision Proposal**

General Education is defined as “the part of a liberal education curriculum shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capacities” (American Association of Colleges and Universities). The general education review process began in October 2019 and culminated in the proposed new vision, set of goals and learning outcomes, and structure, outlined below.

## Vision

Illinois State University’s General Education Curriculum prepares students who can thrive in a complex, interconnected, and global world because they are:

* Informed by knowledge of the natural, sociocultural, technical, and creative worlds and able to critically analyze this knowledge.
* Engaged with cross-disciplinary skills and research/scholarly tools to exercise intellectual curiosity; and
* Responsible for acting with an understanding of personal agency, civic and democratic values, and social justice as they learn how to apply their knowledge and skills to make positive contributions to their communities, democracies, and the world.

## Goals and Learning Outcomes

The goals of the General Education Curriculum are to ensure all students graduating from Illinois State University are informed, engaged, and responsible learners capable of employing multiple systems and tools to creatively address local, state, national, and global challenges. To achieve this, there are 15 core learning outcomes.

Informed learner: A deeper understanding of the world, both as human beings and as contributing individuals, is essential. This understanding must accompany an awareness of the intersections and permeability of disciplinary boundaries associated with knowledge. Through the General Education Curriculum, students will have opportunities to learn how to:

* 1. Examine the human condition (imagination, expression, and/or cultures).
  2. Compare and contrast interrelations within and among global or cross-cultural communities.
  3. Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.

Engaged learner: The cross-disciplinary skills students need are extensive, sophisticated, and expanding with the increase of new technologies. These skills extend beyond core concepts to include the ways of investigating and interacting with human society and the natural world. As students progress through the General Education Curriculum and into their major/degree programs, students will learn to:

* 1. Communicate in diverse settings and groups (orally, visually, and in writing).
  2. Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.
  3. Integrate information discerningly from a variety of sources.
  4. Manage change through intellectual and digital agility.
  5. Collaborate in diverse teams.
  6. Transform knowledge into judgment and action.
  7. Derive meaning from experience and information gathered through observation.

Responsible learner: The integrity of a democratic society depends on individuals’ sense of social responsibility, ethical judgment, and concern for others. These attributes contribute to the exploration of important issues in ways that respect a variety of viewpoints and lead to a deeper understanding of the world. The General Education Curriculum will foster the development of these qualities among students. Specifically, students will learn how to:

* 1. Demonstrate responsibility for contributing to a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.
  2. Demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.
  3. Enact values and practices reflecting democratic processes.
  4. Engage respectfully with multiple perspectives.
  5. Justify a position based on ethics, consequence(s) of decision, and/or personal values.

## Structure

Students must take a total of 33 credit hours across the eleven designated course categories.

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| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **# of credit hours** |
| Information Fluency Through Writing | 3 |
| Communication Inquiry | 3 |
| Applied Writing Inquiry | 3 |
| Quantitative Literacy | 3 |
| Scientific Literacy | 3 |
| Exploring the Human Condition | 3 |
| Creative Arts | 3 |
| Individuals and Society | 3 |
| Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics | 3 |
| Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement | 3 |
| General Education Elective | 3 |

## Course Categories, Descriptions, and Learning Outcomes

**Information Fluency Through Writing (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

What does it mean to write ethically? How do you investigate and explore differing viewpoints? How do you formulate your own opinions and defend and document them with reliable evidence? How do you articulate the complexity of issues by using, sharing, and creating information? As you develop as a writer, these are some of the many questions you will contemplate and address.

Information Fluency is the ability to critically engage with ideas, information, and points of view represented in a variety of texts and genres. Demonstrating information fluency through writing requires the ability to formulate an inquiry, identify and cite sources from multiple venues and formats, evaluate information for credibility and relevance, and synthesize and incorporate information into a structured written argument.

**Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category can address any topic through disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspectives that incorporate reading, viewing, interpreting, and writing. These courses provide a foundation for students to engage with information, ideas, opinions, and arguments about contemporary and/or historical issues, real-world problems, or other significant topics. In alignment with the practice of writing inquiry, courses cover fundamental tools to practice effective and ethical writing, particularly the skills of information fluency. Courses explore writing through research and practice building critical thinking, the ability to synthesize information, develop the mechanics and processes of writing, and ethically produce written texts.

**Student Learning**

Through exploration of writing research and practice, students will use written communication and inquiry to establish the skills needed to analyze different viewpoints, consume, and produce written texts in an ethical manner, and apply their knowledge to engage with local, national, and global issues to prepare them for life-long learning.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet all three of the following primary learning outcomes:

* 2.3 Integrate information discerningly from a variety of sources.
* 2.4 Manage change through intellectual and digital agility.
* 2.6 Transform knowledge into judgment and action.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Communication Inquiry (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

What is ethical and effective communication? How will studying communication help you maintain positive relationships, land that dream job, or become an active member of society? Communication Inquiry enhances your personal, professional, and social lives through communication competence and information fluency.

**Courses in this Category**

Communication courses will prepare students to effectively and purposefully express themselves and listen to others in a variety of communication settings. They will prepare students to present information to an audience using research, evidence, and reasoning. Additionally, students will be prepared to participate in group communication processes and decision-making to analyze socially relevant issues from multiple perspectives.

**Student Learning**

Communication is an essential life skill that enhances students’ personal, professional, and social lives. Communication Inquiry is the study of communication concepts and processes to improve student communication competence, ethical communication, communication confidence, and critical thinking, all with the goal of becoming curious, engaged, and responsible members of a democratic society.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet all four of the following primary learning outcomes:

* + - 2.1 Communicate in diverse settings and groups (orally, visually, and in writing).
    - 2.3 Integrate information discerningly from a variety of sources.
    - 3.3 Enact values and practices reflecting democratic processes.
    - 3.4 Listen and engage respectfully to multiple perspectives.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Applied Writing Inquiry (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

How do you determine the method and format of writing in a particular situation? What written contexts or frameworks are expected and required in a given profession? What are the implications of utilizing inappropriate formats and generating misinformation in an academic, creative, professional, or technical environment? What does it mean to be an ethical writer in a particular field? In your development as a writer, applying these skills in a variety of scenarios will help you become familiar with writing as an everyday activity that can be researched and learned to communicate more effectively and purposefully in the world.

Applied Writing Inquiry is the practice of researching writing concepts and processes required to produce texts across various genres; to understand how to communicate in new or unfamiliar academic, professional, or technical writing situations; to practice the mechanics, writing concepts, and processes of writing; and to write as a culturally specific social activity across diverse sites and communities.

**Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category emphasize student learning through inquiry-based writing research applied to the practical production of academic, creative, professional, or technical writing texts, rather than reproducing “general” writing formulas. All courses in this category must include three components: research inquiry of actual writing and genres in academic, professional, or technical writing situations; application of writing research in the production of texts for the course; and demonstrated awareness of communicating effectively and ethically in writing.

**Student Learning**

Students will advance their written communication and inquiry with a specific focus on academic, professional, and/or technical writing to prepare them for writing within their majors, further academic study, and/or in their chosen career path. The ultimate objective is to help students become culturally situated writers working toward a more just, equitable world through written communication and inquiry.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet all three of the following primary learning outcomes:

* + - 2.1 Communicate in diverse settings and groups (orally, visually, and in writing).
    - 2.3 Integrate information discerningly from a variety of sources.
    - 2.6 Transform knowledge into judgment and action.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Quantitative Literacy (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

How can you use mathematical reasoning to guide decision-making processes that influence individuals and society? How do you know if quantitative reasoning is being used in ways that are ethically just and logically sound? What are the implications of the use and misuse of numeric data?

Quantitative Literacy includes principles of logic and critical reasoning that apply to everyday situations, organizational and societal structures, and the natural world. Quantitative Literacy involves the analysis of data to make informed decisions that are ethically just and logically sound.

**Courses in this Category**

Quantitative Literacy courses will provide the foundation to model and address current and future problems as well as explore opportunities through mathematical, logical, and/or statistical methods. The requirements can be satisfied by one of two options: (1) pure mathematics, statistics, logic, or computing/programming/computer science courses, or (2) applied courses in which students make substantial use of mathematics, computing, and statistics.

**Student Learning**

Quantitative reasoning helps students understand the vocabulary of numbers and numeric processes, how numeric rules and principles are used and misused, and how information in our lives can be put into numeric and statistical terms. Because members of society must make many decisions involving data, being familiar with valid forms of logical reasoning – being quantitatively literate - is critically important to being a responsible member of society.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet both of the following primary learning outcomes:

* + - 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.
    - 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Scientific Literacy (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

How do scientists formulate and answer questions? How are theories supported by evidence? How do you use new information to revise, reject, or accept theories? How can disputes over science be settled? Scientific Literacy is knowledge, understanding, and appropriate application of scientific concepts and processes required for responsible decision-making and participation in civic, cultural, and economic affairs.

**Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category emphasize inquiry-based learning. Understanding the process of science and the application of scientific concepts is a central goal of each course. Courses in this category include (1) the study of scientific content and methodologies used to gain scientific understanding, (2) the application of scientific concepts and practices within the context of at least one scientific discipline, and (3) the examination of the intersection of scientific inquiry with the larger cultural, political, and/or economic context.

**Student Learning**

Scientific Literacy courses support students in becoming familiar with scientific methodologies for developing an increasingly accurate understanding of the universe based on empirical evidence. An important objective is for students to develop knowledge that allows them to participate responsibly in the application of science in society.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet all three of the following primary learning outcomes:

* + - 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.
    - 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.
    - 2.7 Derive meaning from experience and information gathered through observation.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Exploring the Human Condition (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

What defines us as humans? How does our common humanity manifest differently across cultures? How has human thought evolved throughout history? How does the past shape the present and inform the future? How do people organize their lives? How do people live together in a democratic society? How do humans relate to the natural world? These are just some of the big questions—with no single right answers—that scholars explore by looking at how humans have grappled with and expressed their humanity through literature, art, cultural traditions and behavior, history, philosophy, religion, politics, popular culture, mass media, and more.

**Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category may pose any human experience-related topic through any human experience-based disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach. Courses should pose big questions (i.e., those with no single fixed answer) to examine the human condition through readings, films, cultural artifacts/texts/performances in any context (global or cross-cultural communities). Courses should provide students with opportunities to demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures and listen and engage respectfully with multiple perspectives in relation to course materials as well as their classmates and faculty.

**Student Learning**

Students will learn to define and discuss moral and social values, interpret literary texts and historical documents, analyze works of art, and explore ideas. Students will learn not only what these things mean, but why they are important. Courses in this category cultivate the skills essential to being curious, responsible, and engaged members of society: careful reading, informed dialogue, and an awareness of our place in a complex world.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet all four of the following primary learning outcomes:

* + - 1.1 Examine the human condition (imagination, expression, and/or cultures).
    - 1.2 Compare and contrast interrelations within and among global or cross-cultural communities.
    - 3.2 Demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.
    - 3.4 Listen and engage respectfully to multiple perspectives.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Creative Arts (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

How do artists interact with the world and imagine and create new worlds and ideas? What role do audiences play in creating meaning? How do you understand style and skill in creative practice? How do artists engage with materials? The Creative Arts involve modes of expression that use skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others through creative writing, visual and plastic arts, creative technologies, and performing arts.

**Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category explore theory, philosophy, and the creative practices of performers, interdisciplinary artists, and/or makers, informed by the historical and cultural analysis of works and contemporary thought.

**Student Learning**

Students will gain creativity, self-expression, critical thinking, persuasion, creative problem-solving, collaboration, and communication skills through understanding the world around them. Engaging with and learning about the creative arts develops and nurtures creativity, individuality, and identity informed by global perspectives.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet all three of the following primary learning outcomes:

* + - 1.1 Examine the human condition (imagination, expression, and/or cultures).
    - 3.2 Demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.
    - 3.4 Listen and engage respectfully to multiple perspectives.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Individuals and Societies (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

How might individual characteristics, processes, and behaviors influence and be influenced by organizations and environments? How do societal systems, structures, and norms affect human attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors? What does it mean to be a person who participates in society? This category looks inward at individual human processes and conditions and outward at human societies, institutions, relationships, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The exploration of human behavior and cognition, human histories, social/human geography, diverse cultures, political and economic systems, and global societies are some of the ways this category works to enhance our understanding of what it means to be a person intersecting with society and the environment.

**Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category examine human characteristics and processes and may take disciplinary, multidisciplinary, or interdisciplinary approaches to analyze individual and/or societal characteristics and processes.

**Student Learning**

Knowledge gained through the study of the intersections of individuals and society helps students critically evaluate existing social structures and policies to build a more equitable, inclusive, just, and sustainable future. Students will grow in their ability to effectively and critically engage in civic processes.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet all three of the following primary learning outcomes:

* + - 1.1 Examine the human condition (imagination, expression, and/or cultures).
    - 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.
    - 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

What can you learn from combining multiple research fields to investigate questions and problems? How are advances in scientific understanding and technologies improving or hurting our global society and the natural world? How do we anticipate and prepare for future challenges?

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) combine multiple approaches to gathering, analyzing, and applying information to solve real-world problems. The integration of these approaches allows for a more comprehensive understanding of complex problems and the ability to develop innovative solutions using technological, scientific, and computational tools and methods.

**Courses in this Category**

STEM courses focus on creative ways to address various local, state, and global challenges through modeling, analyzing, and interpreting data, obtaining, evaluating, and communicating scientific, quantitative, and technical information, and exploring the philosophy and ethics of STEM. This includes courses that combine modes of inquiry or techniques from at least two disciplines (one of which must be from a STEM discipline) to address opportunities and challenges.

**Student Learning**

Through this process, students will gain knowledge and develop the ability to explore the world around them through the principles and methodologies that guide the various natural and applied sciences.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet all three of the following primary learning outcomes:

* + - 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.
    - 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.
    - 2.7 Derive meaning from experience and information gathered through observation.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

How can you use what you learn in the classroom to make a difference in the world? How can you use your knowledge, skills, and values to address complex topics with civility? How can you enact the values of democracy and justice? Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement courses help students address local, state, national, or global challenges through reflection on learning by doing.

**Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category cultivate civic skills by providing opportunities to apply course material to address opportunities and challenges and use Experiential Learning to engage students in hands-on activities and structured reflection. Experiential Learning generally consists of concrete/hands-on experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization (analyzing concepts), and active experimentation (applying knowledge in new contexts). This category encourages interdisciplinary problem-solving, personal development, and ethical and informed civic engagement.

Examples of Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement courses may include course-based undergraduate research; study abroad; applied or community-engaged research; gen-ed designated internships; case studies (based on societal concerns); social entrepreneurship; field experiences; interactive simulations; service-learning; performance-based learning (such as activities/works of art performed for an audience and revised based on reflection and experimentation).

**Student Learning**

Students will learn to address complex challenges, reflect on their lived experiences, and explore how to transform their knowledge into ethical action. Students will learn to apply knowledge to new and complex contexts and will develop skills that prepare them to be informed, ethical, and engaged community members and life-long learners.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet at least two of the following learning outcomes:

* + - 2.5 Collaborate in diverse teams.
    - 2.6 Transform knowledge into judgment and action.
    - 2.7 Derive meaning from experience and information gathered through observation.
    - 3.1 Demonstrate responsibility for contributing to a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.
    - 3.2 Demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.
    - 3.3 Enact values and practices reflecting democratic processes.
    - 3.4 Listen and engage respectfully to multiple perspectives.
    - 3.5 Justify a position based on ethics, consequence(s) of decision, or personal values.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**General Education Elective (3 credit hours)**

**Description**

The General Education Elective provides students the opportunity to pursue their unique interests, explore major and minor options, build courses toward an interdisciplinary minor, fulfill academic needs, or try something new.

**Courses in this Category**

All courses approved for the General Education Curriculum will fulfill the General Education Elective.

**Student Learning**

Completing a General Education Elective course allows students to expand their knowledge and abilities in the subject area of their choice. It may satisfy the requirements of one of their other academic programs (e.g., major, minor, certificate).

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet the learning outcomes associated with the category in which the elective course resides.