

Common Core Structure

Final Recommendation to the Chancellor
City University of New York Pathways Task Force
December 1, 2011

Preamble

General education at the City University of New York (CUNY) should provide students with well-rounded knowledge, a critical appreciation of diverse cultural and intellectual traditions, an interest in relating the past to the complex world in which they live today, and the ability to help society create a fresh and enlightened future. General education allows students to explore knowledge from various perspectives and to develop their critical abilities to read, write, and use language and other symbol systems effectively and creatively. It must also develop students' intellectual curiosity and commitment to lifelong learning.

The purpose of the first thirty credits of the Common Core of general education at CUNY is to develop a broad range of knowledge and skills, and to build a solid intellectual foundation upon which students can engage in more sophisticated study and analysis at successively higher levels as they complete their degrees. This document is designed to provide a structure for those first thirty credits.¹

I. Required Core (12 credits)

A. English Composition: Six credits

A course in this area must meet all of the following learning outcomes. A student will:

- Read and listen critically and analytically, including identifying an argument's major assumptions and assertions and evaluating its supporting evidence.
- Write clearly and coherently in varied, academic formats (such as formal essays, research papers, and reports) using standard English and appropriate technology to critique and improve one's own and others' texts.
- Demonstrate research skills using appropriate technology, including gathering, evaluating, and synthesizing primary and secondary sources.
- Support a thesis with well-reasoned arguments, and communicate persuasively across a variety of contexts, purposes, audiences, and media.
- Formulate original ideas and relate them to the ideas of others by employing the conventions of ethical attribution and citation.

¹ This structure is designed to evolve over time. As the CUNY Board of Trustees *Resolution on Creating an Efficient Transfer System* indicates: "All of these pathways policies and processes, including the Common Core, [will] be reviewed and evaluated each year for three years beginning in 2013, and every three years thereafter, to modify them as necessary to improve them or to meet changing needs."

B. Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: Three credits

A course in this area must meet all of the following learning outcomes. A student will:

- Interpret and draw appropriate inferences from quantitative representations, such as formulas, graphs, or tables.
- Use algebraic, numerical, graphical, or statistical methods to draw accurate conclusions and solve mathematical problems.
- Represent quantitative problems expressed in natural language in a suitable mathematical format.
- Effectively communicate quantitative analysis or solutions to mathematical problems in written or oral form.
- Evaluate solutions to problems for reasonableness using a variety of means, including informed estimation.
- Apply mathematical methods to problems in other fields of study.

C. Life and Physical Sciences: Three credits

A course in this area must meet all of the following learning outcomes. A student will:

- Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a life or physical science.
- Apply the scientific method to explore natural phenomena, including hypothesis development, observation, experimentation, measurement, data analysis, and data presentation.
- Use the tools of a scientific discipline to carry out collaborative laboratory² investigations.
- Gather, analyze, and interpret data and present it in an effective written laboratory or fieldwork report.
- Identify and apply research ethics and unbiased assessment in gathering and reporting scientific data.

II. Flexible Core (18 credits)

Six three-credit liberal arts and sciences³ courses, with at least one course from each of the following five areas and no more than two courses in any discipline or interdisciplinary field. All Flexible Core courses must meet the following three learning outcomes. A student will:

- Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
- Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
- Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

² “Laboratory” may include traditional wet labs, simulations, or field experience.

³ “Liberal arts and sciences” courses are defined by the New York State Education Department.
<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/lrp/liberalarts.htm>.

A. World Cultures and Global Issues

A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

- Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures or global issues, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, ethnic studies, foreign languages (building upon previous language acquisition), geography, history, political science, sociology, and world literature.
- Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.
- Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies.
- Analyze the significance of one or more major movements that have shaped the world's societies.
- Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.
- Speak, read, and write a language other than English, and use that language to respond to cultures other than one's own.

B. U.S. Experience in its Diversity

A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

- Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the U.S. experience in its diversity, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, history, political science, psychology, public affairs, sociology, and U.S. literature.
- Analyze and explain one or more major themes of U.S. history from more than one informed perspective.
- Evaluate how indigenous populations, slavery, or immigration have shaped the development of the United States.
- Explain and evaluate the role of the United States in international relations.
- Identify and differentiate among the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government and analyze their influence on the development of U.S. democracy.
- Analyze and discuss common institutions or patterns of life in contemporary U.S. society and how they influence, or are influenced by, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation.

C. Creative Expression

A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

- Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring creative expression, including, but not limited to, arts, communications, creative writing, media arts, music, and theater.
- Analyze how arts from diverse cultures of the past serve as a foundation for those of the present, and describe the significance of works of art in the societies that created them.
- Articulate how meaning is created in the arts or communications and how experience is interpreted and conveyed.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the skills involved in the creative process.
- Use appropriate technologies to conduct research and to communicate.

D. Individual and Society

A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

- Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the relationship between the individual and society, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, history, journalism, philosophy, political science, psychology, public affairs, religion, and sociology.
- Examine how an individual's place in society affects experiences, values, or choices.
- Articulate and assess ethical views and their underlying premises.
- Articulate ethical uses of data and other information resources to respond to problems and questions.
- Identify and engage with local, national, or global trends or ideologies, and analyze their impact on individual or collective decision-making.

E. Scientific World

A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

- Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the scientific world, including, but not limited to: computer science, history of science, life and physical sciences, linguistics, logic, mathematics, psychology, statistics, and technology-related studies.
- Demonstrate how tools of science, mathematics, technology, or formal analysis can be used to analyze problems and develop solutions.
- Articulate and evaluate the empirical evidence supporting a scientific or formal theory.
- Articulate and evaluate the impact of technologies and scientific discoveries on the contemporary world, such as issues of personal privacy, security, or ethical responsibilities.
- Understand the scientific principles underlying matters of policy or public concern in which science plays a role.

Variant for the Required Core

A college cannot require a student to take a four-credit course to satisfy any area of the Common Core. In the Required Core, a college must offer enough three-credit courses for all students to satisfy the areas of “Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning” and “Life and Physical Sciences.” Thereafter, however, a college may choose to offer optional, four-credit math or science courses to satisfy one or both of these areas.⁴ The college submitting such a four-credit course must certify that it satisfies a major degree requirement. The four-credit course would then fulfill the three-credit requirement of “Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning” or “Life and Physical Sciences,” and it would also count toward degree requirements, as appropriate. If a student takes a four-credit course but decides not to enter a program in which the course counts toward a degree, the course would still satisfy the three-credit requirement in the Required Core, and the additional credit would count as elective credit.

⁴ This variant does not apply to the Flexible Core, or to other fields of study. The CUNY-wide Committee tasked with reviewing and approving courses proposed for the Common Core will not approve any four-credit math or science courses until after the submitting college has had approved a sufficient number of three-credit math and science courses for students’ general education.