

GENERAL EDUCATION STATEMENT

The General Education component of higher education specifically focuses on introducing students to ways of knowing, integrative knowledge, appreciation of historical context, common themes of human experience, social responsibility, analytical reasoning, civic engagement, and the development of practical skills and reflective habits of mind. The General Education requirements at Washburn University are designed with the intent of providing students with a grounding in liberal arts and sciences and shaping an informed, capable citizenry through a broad education in a range of disciplines. These courses ensure that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage with our rapidly-changing world over their lifetimes.

In order to accomplish these goals, students will complete core courses in composition and mathematics and a broad range of course work in Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences and Mathematics designed specifically to meet the following five major learning outcomes:

1. **Communication.** Communications skills involve the ability to clearly express and understand ideas in written, oral and non-verbal forms. Communication includes the practical exchange of information, which can include the ability to listen, comprehend and respond to others, as well as the creative expression of ideas in the visual, written and performing arts. In oral and written communication, students will demonstrate the ability to shape a central thesis, organize an argument, and formally support that argument. Students will be able to understand and interpret creative expression based on knowledge of the forms and principles of various expressive media.
2. **Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning and Literacy.** Quantitative reasoning involves the ability to work with numerical data and the higher-order thinking skills required to make and understand mathematical arguments. Scientific literacy involves the acquisition and application of skills and knowledge necessary to understand the nature and content of science, and to evaluate scientific arguments using evidence-based reasoning. Students will be able to understand and develop arguments supported by quantitative evidence, clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, statistical inference, mathematical equations and functions, etc., as appropriate), and apply mathematical and scientific methods to solve problems from a wide array of contexts and everyday situations.
3. **Information Literacy and Technology.** Information literacy and technology involves the ability to locate, select, use and evaluate information obtained from appropriate electronic and/or printed resources, including a critical analysis of the information and the credibility of the sources of information. It also involves the ability to use technology to research, organize, present and/or communicate information in meaningful ways. Additionally, information literacy and technology includes skills such as the ability to understand the development of technology and its impact on society, the ability to understand and use existing technologies and information to address real-world issues, and the ability to recognize emerging technological trends and their possible impact on the future.
4. **Critical and Creative Thinking.** Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of assessing and evaluating ideas and forms. It involves clarifying questions, reflecting upon meaning, comparing multiple viewpoints, and evaluating evidence to make an informed judgment. Creative thinking involves the production of original ideas, forms or works by making connections, generating alternatives, and elaborating or exploring new applications of accepted practices through innovation and/or invention. Critical and creative thinkers gather information from experience, observation, reasoning, reflection and communication. They explore and synthesize related ideas, connect them to prior knowledge, and apply them to new contexts.
5. **Global Citizenship, Ethics, and Diversity.** Global citizenship refers to the broad understanding of peoples and cultures in the United States and around the world, and to humankind's place and effects in the world. Global citizenship includes a respect for the commonalities and differences in peoples, including an understanding of values, beliefs and customs. It places an emphasis on the economic, religious, political, geographic, linguistic, historic, environmental, and social aspects that define cultures. It places an emphasis on ethics, equality and human rights, an appreciation for diversity, the interconnectedness of societies and cultures, and a commitment to finding solutions to problems that can affect the world.

While all courses offered at the university educate students in most if not all of the five learning outcomes identified as critical to providing an educated citizenry, some courses are designed to emphasize and assess particular learning outcomes. Each of these courses bases a substantial portion (typically at least 30%) of the final course grade on the specified student learning outcome. These courses are identified in the course catalog description (Communication: COM; Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning: QSR; Information Literacy and Technology: ILT; Critical and Creative Thinking: CCT; and Global Citizenship, Ethics, and Diversity: GED). All of the courses in the general education distribution requirements have been identified as meeting a specified student learning outcome. However, with the exception of the Associate of Liberal Studies degree, general education distribution courses must be completed outside the student's major. The number of general education distribution hours will depend on the specific degree requirements listed below. The individual student should check with the major department. Although Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are a useful tool for assessing general education courses, it must also be recognized that SLOs in no sense equal general education. Nothing in this document should be taken to construe that equivalency, or to suggest that every course entailing an SLO should be considered as counting toward general education.