

THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

MISSION STATEMENT: UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill strives to cultivate the skills, knowledge, values, and habits that will allow graduates to lead personally enriching and socially responsible lives. The undergraduate experience should foster the qualities graduates will need as effective citizens of rapidly changing, richly diverse, and increasingly interconnected local, national, and worldwide communities.

To this end our curriculum seeks to provide for all students: (1) the foundational skills that will facilitate future learning; (2) broad experience with the methods and results of the most widely employed approaches to knowledge; (3) a sense of how to integrate these approaches to knowledge in ways that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries; and (4) a more thorough grounding in one particular subject. The General Education Curriculum focuses on the first three of these curricular goals; the undergraduate major addresses the fourth.

OUTCOME GOALS FOR UNDERGRADUATE GENERAL EDUCATION

Preface

The outcome goals presented here will form the basis for the new curricular requirements to be proposed for undergraduates at UNC-CH. However, each outcome goal will not mandate a separate requirement, rather each requirement will be associated with a subset of these goals. Some of the goals may be achieved through a single requirement; others will be achieved only by the cumulative effect of several requirements (and, indeed, by the cumulative effect of all of a student's study here). Some goals may be addressed in more than one requirement, and some broad goals may be relevant to all of the requirements that are ultimately proposed. The committees charged with formulating the requirements to be proposed will exercise their creativity to find ways to achieve the goals in the smallest possible number of requirements, allowing the students the greatest possible flexibility consistent with the achievement of these goals. In all cases, the goals represent things that our graduates should know, understand, and be able to do by the time they have completed their degrees. We believe that these goals represent the basis for becoming an educated person, for effective citizenship, and for lifelong learning.

I. FOUNDATIONS: To provide the foundational skills that will facilitate life-long learning.

A. *Written and Oral Communication*

Graduates should be able to express themselves clearly and effectively in writing and orally, both in English and in another language.

1. Writing, reading, and speaking in English

Since clear thinking and communicating are linked, educated persons need not only mastery of English grammar, syntax, and elocution, but also the skills of organization, exposition, and argumentation. Graduates should therefore have sufficient mastery of:

- a. Exposition and argument: to be able to state, support, and defend a thesis both orally and in writing; use the conventions of format and structure appropriate to the situation; and understand and be able to use different genres of writing and speaking.
- b. Critical thinking in reading and writing: to read intelligently and make effective use, both in speaking and in writing, of what is said; find, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize

appropriate primary and secondary source material; and integrate their own ideas with those of others in their written and oral presentations, giving proper credit to ideas and language taken from others.

- c. The process of composition: to generate, revise, edit, and proof-read multiple drafts; critique their own and others' work; work cooperatively and effectively with others, when appropriate, to produce a text for written or oral delivery; and make appropriate use of technologies available to facilitate communication.
 - d. The conventions of language: to recognize and use appropriate formats for different kinds of written and oral communication; use the norms of documentation expected by the desired audience; and employ the syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling of standard written English.
2. Writing, reading, and speaking in a second language
As citizens of an increasingly interconnected world, graduates need a secure working knowledge of at least one language other than English and an acquaintance with the principal cultures and peoples employing that language. Students should therefore:
- a. Be able to communicate directly, orally and in writing, with speakers of the acquired second language.*
 - b. Be able to read and understand texts of average complexity written by and for native speakers of the second language.
 - c. Be conversant with the behavioral norms and cultural practices--frequently quite different from ours--of the relevant speech community.

*For learners of languages with no living native speakers (e.g. Latin, ancient Greek, classical Chinese, Sanskrit), traditional standards of competence in reading and writing will normally be substituted for this goal.

B. Quantitative Reasoning

Graduates should be able to think clearly and critically about quantitative and spatial questions and have the skills to be able to solve problems in various real-world contexts. Specifically, our graduates should be able to:

1. Recognize situations where quantitative methods can be used to model and solve problems, and employ appropriate tools in formulating and solving a particular problem.
2. Reason using numbers. Recognize quantitatively unreasonable solutions or conclusions, and demonstrate facility in the using of numbers.
3. Collect and interpret quantitative data, draw appropriate inferences, understand the role of chance in the occurrence of events, determine which (if any) of two or more possible conclusions are supported by a given set of data and find potential sources of error.
4. Use quantitative information and mathematical analysis to construct logically sound arguments, question assumptions, and recognize fallacies.
5. Express ideas and concepts from the mathematical sciences orally and in writing.
6. Understand the role of the mathematical sciences in cultural change and their connections with other sciences, the arts, and the humanities.

C. Critical Thinking and Research Skills

Graduates should possess the skills and habits of mind that will enable them to think critically about their own reasoning and the reasoning of others, formulate and defend sound conclusions, pursue appropriate strategies to solve problems, and to conduct, present, and defend their research. Specifically, graduates should have the ability to:

1. Analyze a reasoned argument, distinguishing premises and evidence from intermediate and final conclusions.
2. Recognize presuppositions (i.e., unstated premises) of reasoned arguments.
3. Recognize common errors in reasoning, evaluate others' reasoning, and improve their own reasoning.
4. Analyze and interpret information to solve problems, and use a variety of problem-solving strategies.
5. Frame significant research problems and evaluate strategies for investigating the problem.
6. Use experimentation, observation, archival research, or other appropriate means to solve research problems.
7. Present and defend solutions to research problems in written, oral, or graphic form.

D. Moral Reasoning

Graduates should understand the ethical dimensions of human life. They should be prepared to think and act morally as individuals and as members of local, national, and global communities. They should be able to plan professional and personal life paths in ethical terms. Specifically, graduates should:

1. Be sensitive to the moral dimensions of life and distinguish moral problems from other kinds of practical problems.
2. Be aware of differing moral perspectives.
3. Be aware of contemporary moral issues.
4. Be able to assess conflicting moral judgments and defend their own.
5. Be able to apply ethical principles in a variety of personal, professional, and civic contexts.

II. APPROACHES: To provide broad experience with the methods and results of the most widely employed approaches to knowledge.

A. The Natural Sciences

Graduates should be familiar with the natural world and scientific methods of understanding it. They also should be familiar with the scientific basis of technology and its uses, and should be able to think critically about the ethical and social implications of scientific inquiry and technological change. These goals imply that graduates must be familiar with both the content and the approach of the natural sciences. Specifically, graduates should be familiar with:

1. The physical sciences, including the basic physical laws that govern matter and energy and their interactions; the compositions and reactions of chemical substances; time and space and the nature and origin of the objects in the universe; and Earth processes and evolution.
2. The life sciences, including the basic principles that govern the evolution and organization of biological systems; the fundamental components of living organisms; the complex interactions that sustain life; and the interdependent relationship between humans and the natural world.
3. The scientific method: graduates should be able to make observations, design experiments, generate and analyze data using appropriate quantitative tools, use abstract reasoning to interpret the data, and formulate and test hypotheses with scientific rigor.
4. Certainty and uncertainty: graduates should be able to make informed judgments in which they differentiate among scientific models that have varying degrees of factual support. They should be familiar with the interdependence of scientific knowledge across disciplines.

5. Social and ethical implications: graduates should recognize that science and technology raise moral issues. They should be prepared to make informed judgments on such issues as they arise in daily life and public policy.
6. Science and culture: graduates should be familiar with the role of scientific thought in human cultures, and the connections and applications of the natural sciences to the social and behavioral sciences, the humanities, and the arts.

B. The Social and Behavioral Sciences

Graduates should have an understanding of the role of society in shaping the world and their place in it. They should be able to think critically about the behavior of individuals and groups, the role of institutions and processes, and the influence of beliefs and values in a variety of social contexts. They should be familiar with recent findings and leading theories in the social and behavioral sciences, and have an elementary grasp of the variety of investigative methods employed by social and behavioral scientists. They should be able to analyze social change comparatively and historically, and understand how social science can be employed to analyze and evaluate social problems and policies. To this end, graduates should:

1. Understand basic social science concepts such as culture, society, politics, and economy, and the relationships among these concepts.
2. Be able to analyze the impact of major social institutions such as the family, education, government, media, and religion on individual and group behavior.
3. Understand the cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and physiological aspects of human behavior across the life span.
4. Be able to chronicle, analyze, and explain the past using social scientific methods, and apply comparative and geographical perspectives to begin to understand society, culture, politics, and economy.
5. Be able to apply social scientific methods in order to analyze and evaluate social problems and policies.
6. Appreciate the diversity among the social and behavioral sciences, and their relations to one another and to the natural sciences, the humanities, and the arts.
7. Understand and appreciate their rights and responsibilities as citizens, as members of society, and as inhabitants of an increasingly interdependent world.

C. The Humanities and the Arts

Historical Analysis: Graduates should have the critical perspective on themselves and their world that is generated by the study of the recent and distant past. Historical and cultural study includes a wide range of humanistic, quantitative, and theoretical approaches, and graduates should be familiar with those ways of chronicling, analyzing, and explaining the past. They should be able to:

1. Judiciously interpret verbal, visual, and quantitative evidence about the past.
2. Self-consciously formulate (and assess) arguments about social and cultural change over time.

Philosophical Analysis: Graduates should be able to think critically and systematically about the most fundamental questions of human life. They should be familiar with some of the reasoned answers humans have offered to questions that arise when they reflect on themselves and interact with the world: What can we know? What is beauty? How should we act? But graduates need more than familiarity with others' answers to fundamental questions of morality, religion, art, science, and politics; they need the conceptual tools to assess arguments and the elementary

skills to work out their own coherent and compelling view of the world. To this end, graduates should:

1. Understand basic concepts that organize thinking about human life and the natural world.
2. Be able to identify and assess their own and others' most fundamental presuppositions.
3. Be familiar with varied approaches to philosophical issues and divergent answers to fundamental questions.
4. Be able to understand and assess philosophical arguments.
Be able to formulate, revise, and defend their own beliefs and values.

Visual, Performing, and Literary Arts. Works of artistic expression and imaginative creation--including painting, sculpture, architecture, music, poetry, fiction, non-fiction, drama, and film--offer distinct angles of vision on a wide range of human experience. Graduates should be familiar both with how such art works are produced and how they are analyzed. As a result, graduates should be able to:

1. Understand a creative process by looking at the ways that artists acquire and transform ideas.
2. Evaluate the significance of forms of art from different periods and cultural origins and develop a range of criteria for evaluating them.
3. Recognize how human experience is perceived and explored in music, art, drama and literature, whether separately or in combination.
4. Understand that works of art can have multiple meanings, which may depend on cultural and/or historical context.
5. Understand how works of visual, performing, and literary art are constituted and have the skills required to analyze and interpret them.
6. Demonstrate an awareness of the relations among author, reader, text, and the circumstances in which the text is produced and received.
7. Enrich their lives by active participation in the arts.

III. CONNECTIONS: To provide a sense of how to integrate these foundations and approaches in ways that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries and to create pathways from the campus to local, national, and worldwide communities.

A. Connecting Foundations: Skills Across the Curriculum

The foundational skills delineated in section I of the curriculum are vital to learning at all stages, and should be incorporated into every aspect of a graduate's academic experience. Graduates therefore should have:

1. Exercised and improved their skills in written and oral communication and quantitative reasoning in as many courses as possible, beyond those designed specifically to teach those skills.
2. Exercised and improved their skills in critical thinking, research, and moral reasoning in as wide a variety of fields as possible, including but not limited to their major field of study.

B. Connecting Approaches: Interdisciplinary Study

Graduates should have a sense of how to integrate the varied approaches to knowledge in ways that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries. To that end, they should:

1. Be familiar with some of the ways that the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts connect.
2. Be able to draw on multiple, relevant fields of study to analyze issues and solve problems.

C. Capstone Experiences: Making Connections from within the Major

Graduates should have been given the opportunity in their junior or senior year to broaden, deepen, and integrate the experience of the major by connecting it with learning in the general education curriculum. The capstone experience, which will be situated in the major department but function as an important component of the broader undergraduate curriculum, might vary in form according to the size of the department and the nature of the discipline. It might be a capstone course, senior thesis, independent study, professional internship, research experience, or creative project. But to the extent that the major field and institutional context allow it, the capstone experience should have encouraged graduates to:

1. Draw on the foundational skills encountered in the general education curriculum.
2. Draw together the broad experience with the methods and results of various approaches to knowledge-as those inform focused study in the major.
3. Participate in a small community of learners comprised of faculty members, graduate students, and undergraduate peers.
4. Symbolically mark the culmination and integration of undergraduate learning.

D. U.S. Diversity and Global Citizenship

In order to fulfill the obligations of U.S. citizenship, graduates of this public university should have an understanding of the ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural diversity of the state, region, and nation. As citizens of an increasingly interconnected world, graduates also should have an understanding of the diverse languages, peoples, and cultures around the globe and of the political, economic, and political forces that impact these. More specifically, graduates should:

1. Have some knowledge and understanding of at least two major ethnic groups within the United States, including African Americans, European Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, or Asian Americans.
2. Have some knowledge and understanding of at least one major area of the world outside the United States (or the graduate's country of citizenship, if not USA),
3. Have some knowledge and understanding of at least one non-Western, third-world, or indigenous or tribal culture.
4. Have some knowledge and understanding of interrelationships among these and other groups or areas as analyzed historically, comparatively, and as aspects of global forces, patterns, and trends.

“Understanding” includes familiarity with an area's or group's language, geography, religion, and worldview across a spectrum ranging from urban to “indigenous” or “tribal” settings and with the impact of political, demographic, ecological, and economic forces.

E. Connecting Generations: Intergenerational Contact and Lifelong Learning

Undergraduate study is a limited phase in the cycle of living and learning. Accordingly, graduates should have been provided with opportunities to share learning with those younger and older, including opportunities that would:

1. Expand their own education by outreach to younger students in K-12 schools;
2. Expose them to graduate and professional students whose research and learning is freshly gleaned from lab, library, or fieldwork; and to life-long learners, including alumni.
3. Expose them to the rich experiences of senior citizens who have experienced the history that the students study.

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F. Creating Campus Pathways: Study Abroad, Student Internships, Service Learning

Campus pathways diversify and broaden liberal education and offer students opportunities for additional educational and professional development. Because citizenship requires it, graduates should have gained an appreciation for the value of service to others in the local, national, and global community. They should have been given the opportunity for experiences designed to:

1. Encourage them to function as self-reliant citizens with an awareness of differing cultures, and prepare them to enhance the lives of our citizens by responsible leadership for the state and the nation.
2. Foster exchange of knowledge and understanding among groups and individuals in the state, the nation, and the world, by study abroad, international exchange, and other means.
3. Engage students, faculty, and other community partners to form service-learning partnerships that address the needs and concerns of North Carolina communities.
4. Advance professional understanding of the workplace through internships.