



DRAFT

Proposed New General Education Model

This program is a result of the recommendations outlined in the Faculty Senate Memorandum of Action 16/06.

Design principles:

- A structure that supports the essential learning outcomes by integrating and applying them in content courses which will enhance and support students' successful work in their chosen majors and minors.
- The learning outcomes must be assessable.
- An important feature of the programming is the sequencing where specified to ensure students are learning skills before developing and applying them.
- The program emphasizes the inclusion of the following learning outcomes throughout:
 - Planetary Sustainability
 - Diversity and Inclusion
 - Global Awareness
 - Civic responsibility and community engagement
 - Additionally, 'real-world' problems chosen by faculty to engage students at all levels.

Level I – Foundations: Four Courses

- Writing (includes information literacy)
- Communication (oral and digital)
- Quantitative Literacy
- Search for Identity

The first level will build foundations essential for students' success in their majors and minors and in their careers and lives after they leave Western. These essential skills are proficiency in writing, oral and digital communication, quantitative literacy, and informational literacy. Foundations courses should be taken at the beginning of the student's course of study.

Rather than thinking of them as separate unrelated subjects we would like students to make connections between different skills and courses. One way to achieve these connections is to ask faculty teaching these courses to include an assignment topic from the program themes listed above.

Quantitative literacy should be designed to help improve the low levels of applied mathematical literacy amongst entering students and help overcome some of the numbers phobia that many students feel. Nearly all career paths require a foundational knowledge of data analysis and the ability to interpret and present results.

To engage our students and give them a perspective on their intellectual journey, a class will ask them to think about their identity and sense of self as a step toward thinking about their place in the community and global world. We see great importance in the cultivation of self-knowledge as part of the meta-cognitive skills our students need to develop.

The learning outcomes from the MoA covered at the Foundations level are:

- Demonstrate effective and appropriate oral, written and digital communication abilities
- Demonstrate and apply information literacy
- Analyze and interpret quantitative data
- Increase foundational knowledge of the humanities and social sciences



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Level II – Exploration and Discovery: Six Courses

In the second level students will: 1) further develop the communication skills emphasized in the Foundations level through a course exploring Identity and Community that will also focus on their critical and creative thinking skills; and 2) foster their intellectual growth and personal responsibility by taking five additional courses. The Exploration and Discovery level requires a total of six courses as described below.

1) Identity and Community

This course builds on the Level I Search for Identity course, which is a prerequisite for it. Focusing on either critical thinking or creative/artistic thinking with an emphasis on diversity and inclusion, students will practice and develop their reading, writing and presenting skills. The course will help students hone their critical understanding of the relationships between individuals and society, including the dynamics of affiliation and difference in communities. There are many possible ways to define groups or communities. Examples include religious, ethnic, political, philosophical, scientific or artistic identities, movements, perspectives, or mode of expression. The goal of the course is therefore to develop the students' analytical, creative, and communication skills while considering the importance and impact of community.

2) Human Culture; Natural and Physical World; Personal and Social Responsibility

These five courses may be taken in any order. Students may wish to take some of these in their first year along with the Foundations courses.

- Personal wellness (physical/spiritual/mental)
- Language other than English (completion of second-semester level; may test out)
- Scientific literacy
- Scientific literacy with lab
(one of the scientific literacy courses must include a sustainability emphasis)
- Critical or creative/artistic thinking (complements Identity and Community course)

In sum, the learning outcomes from the MoA covered at the Exploration and Discovery level are:

- Develop creative and critical thinking
- Practice sensitivity to diversity and inclusion
- Develop understanding and practices for personal wellness
- Gain familiarity with a language other than English
- Demonstrate and apply scientific literacy
- Develop practices for planetary sustainability
- Increase knowledge of the sciences, social sciences, humanities and the arts
- Apply different methods of intellectual inquiry, investigation and discovery

Level III – Connections: Two Courses

- Local and national perspectives
- Global perspectives

The Connections courses are taken after the Identity and Community courses and are the culmination of the program. These courses widen the lens of the students' perspectives to engage them in local, national and global issues, and at the same time develop reading, writing, communication, and reasoning skills even further. In these "Big Questions" or "Real-World Problems" classes, students will use their skills to address program themes or a question that is important to humanity and also to their lives. This is where integrative and applied learning should take place. Students will address a problem from multiple disciplinary perspectives, interpret information, understand complex aspects, learn to listen to contrasting viewpoints, synthesize them and express an opinion both in writing and verbally. Classes could be team-taught or utilize guest speakers. Students may choose from a wide range of disciplines, including areas applicable to their majors or minors.



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Learning outcomes from the MoA covered at the Connections level include:

- Develop global awareness
- Apply ethical, critical, and informed thought within and across disciplines
- Work both independently and in collaboration with others to achieve goals

Levels I, II and III as a Unified Program

Specific learning outcomes are addressed within each level. In addition, learning outcomes from the MoA that are a result of the program as a whole are:

- Develop awareness of how everyday actions affect quality of life for all
- Apply different methods of intellectual inquiry, investigation and discovery
- Enable students to exercise civic responsibility and community engagement
- Enable students to become lifelong learners

Scaffolding through a Pathway Approach

Personal development and social consciousness progress through the levels, starting with a search for the self (Search for Identity, Level I), followed by considerations of identity seen in a community context (Identity and Community, Level II), leading to the national and global stage in Connections (Perspectives, Level III).

Writing and presenting are explicitly taught at the Foundation level. These skills are practiced and reinforced in terms of both quality and quantity in Level II Identity and Community courses and then at a more rigorous standard in Level III Connections. A baccalaureate level writing course within a major remains a requirement of the program but is not included in the minimum 37 credit hours. Connections courses should also prepare students for capstone projects and it is hoped that a capstone course if not already in a program will be developed and offered.

Built-In Prerequisites

Students would be required to complete the Level I Writing and Communication courses and also the Search for Identity course before taking the Identity and Community course in Level II. The Identity and Community course in Level II is a prerequisite for the Perspectives courses in Level III.

Level I Quantitative Literacy is a prerequisite for the scientific literacy courses in Level II.

Flexibility

- Students may take one or more of the five Human Culture, Natural and Physical World, Personal and Social Responsibility courses alongside their Foundations courses during their first year.
- Students who study abroad may receive credit for one or more of the required learning outcomes (e.g. language other than English and/or Global Perspectives).
- Students may test out of the language requirement
- Transfer articulation agreements with community colleges will be taken into account so that transfer students do not perceive the program as a disincentive to come to WMU.

Implementation

Faculty will be consulted in the development of course criteria corresponding to learning outcomes.