

MIDDLE STATES STANDARD III

Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

March 2018

Standard III, Criterion #5: at institutions that offer undergraduate education, a general education program, free standing or integrated into academic disciplines, that:

- a. offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments as well as within their academic field;*
- b. offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives;*

Information to partially address Standard III:

CUNY General Education Framework

<http://www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/pathways/>

History and Structure

In 2011 the CUNY Board of Trustees passed a Resolution that provided transfer credit guarantees for all three components of the curriculum – general education, majors, and electives. These guarantees apply to all students, regardless of the type of degree program they are transferring from, regardless of the type of degree program they are entering, and regardless of whether they have earned a degree prior to transfer. First, the Resolution specified that general education at CUNY consist of a 30-credit Common Core for all campuses across the University and a 12-credit College Option for students enrolled in bachelor's programs. Second, the Resolution specified that disciplinary committees in CUNY's largest transfer majors be convened to identify between three and six courses that would be accepted as entry-level courses for beginning the major at any college offering the major. Third, the Resolution required all courses completed for credit at one CUNY college to be accepted for credit upon transfer to any other CUNY college. These curricular requirements were to be fully implemented beginning in Fall 2013 for first-time and transfer students. Currently enrolled students could opt in to the new curricular requirements.

The Resolution called for creation of a Task Force that would make a recommendation on the contours of the 30-credit Common Core structure to the Chancellor. The Task Force consisted of a Steering Committee with 12 faculty members, two administrators, and two students and a Working Committee with representatives from each college and all large enrollment disciplines, including 36 faculty members, one administrator, and two students. The Task Force developed a set of broad Learning Goals that were modeled after the Essential Learning Goals developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) Liberal Education and America's Progress (LEAP) initiative. The Task Force also developed a draft framework for the 30-credit Common Core, for all of CUNY's undergraduate colleges. It is composed of eight areas including three Required Core areas—English Composition, Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning, and Life and Physical Sciences—and five additional thematic Flexible Core areas—Creative Expression, Individual and Society, World Cultures and Global Issues, Scientific World, and U.S. Experience in its Diversity. Individual colleges within CUNY determine which courses belong in each area, depending on their academic priorities. Faculty members at the colleges have developed all courses, and each course must go through the requisite departmental and college curriculum approval processes on campus.

The learning outcomes for each area determine which college courses will fit within each area. They allow for flexibility and individual college and student choices in fulfilling the area requirements and establish a common high standard across CUNY. The curricular framework, based on established learning outcomes, shifts the focus from inputs to measurable outcomes of learning, with attention to specific skills and knowledge.

Curricular Flexibility, Student Learning Outcomes, and Course Review Process

The CUNY Pathways initiative provides the structure and framework for general education so that courses can transfer smoothly across the university. The colleges each create their own general education curriculum within the framework and select each of the courses that populate the eight thematic areas. Basing the Common Core areas on learning outcomes allows each college considerable flexibility in deciding which courses will populate each area of the framework. None of the thematic areas in the Flexible Core is defined by discipline, and courses in any discipline or interdisciplinary field may fit in a range of areas. For example, the area "U.S. Experience in its Diversity" offers courses from many fields, including Literature, History, Sociology, Political Science, American Studies, Geography, and Performing Arts. Further, all Flexible Core courses must meet the following three skill-based 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.

A Common Core Course Review Committee, or the CCCRC, consisting entirely of faculty from

across CUNY, is tasked with the review and approval of all Common Core courses. This committee ensures that all Common Core courses meet the learning outcomes set forth by the original Task Force. Courses are submitted to the university CCCRC only after they have been approved and vetted by the local governance process at each college—generally, department and college curriculum committees. The CCCRC membership is made publicly available on the Pathways website.

A Course Submission Form was developed so that colleges could be explicit about the course assignments and activities that meet the learning outcomes. The blank field next to each relevant learning outcome should be completed to explain the assignments and course activities that will address that learning outcome. For the Required Core (English Composition, Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning, and Life and Physical Sciences), courses must meet each of the learning outcomes listed.

For the Flexible Core, there are two groups of learning outcomes. Courses must meet each of the three learning outcomes listed in the first group—plus at least three of the learning outcomes in the second group. (Colleges can choose which three in the second group.) The CCCRC considers both the Course Submission Form and the sample syllabus when determining if a course meets the learning outcomes. The syllabus should provide additional context to demonstrate how each learning outcome will be met.

Overview of Pathways Common Core Framework

The 30-credit Common Core framework is:

Required Common Core (12 credits / 4 courses)

- English Composition (6 credits / 2 courses)
- Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning (3 credits / 1 course)
- Life and Physical Sciences (3 credits / 1 course)

Flexible Common Core (18 credits/ 6 courses)

- World Cultures and Global Issues (3 credits / 1 course)
- U.S. Experience in Its Diversity (3 credits / 1 course)
- Creative Expression (3 credits / 1 course)
- Individual and Society (3 credits / 1 course)
- Scientific World (3 credits / 1 course)
- One additional course from one of the above areas.

There are over 2,400 Pathways faculty-reviewed and approved courses being offered across the university in the Common Core. Colleges may offer “STEM variant” courses in the areas of Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning, Life and Physical Science, and Scientific World. STEM variant courses may be offered for more than three credits, as long as these courses are required for at least one major at the college, and as long as there are also sufficient three-

credit options available to students in these areas. STEM variant courses allow students who enter CUNY with advanced math or science skills, as well as those pursuing STEM majors with particular math or science course sequencing requirements, to take advanced courses within the general education curriculum.

Pathways Evaluation and General Education Assessment

The Board Resolution requires that all Pathways policies and processes, including the Common Core, 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. Thus, the university conducts programmatic review and assessment annually, tracking student success indicators, course taking patterns, and course transfer patterns. Pathway program evaluation data sets are posted on the CUNY Pathways website for easy access and review. The colleges continue to conduct student learning outcomes assessment at the course and skill level as they always have, and the majority of the courses in the Pathways areas have been part of each college's general education curriculum prior to the implementation of the Pathways framework.

Each college works within the Framework to design a general education curriculum where students can acquire and demonstrate essential skills and competencies in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and information literacy. In addition to the student learning outcomes required of each Pathway thematic area and the three general education skills required of all courses in the Flexible Core, each college can require additional competencies, depending of the values of the college. Such skills can include technological competency; leadership; an appreciation of the arts; and an understanding of cultural diversity, ethics, values, social justice, and global awareness, to name a few. In this manner, each college tailors a general education curriculum unique to their college goals and values and in alignment with the accreditation standards and requirements of their unique programs.

The Pathways Framework alone does not ensure that all students will acquire and demonstrate essential skills and competencies, as it is a structure and not a curriculum. The process and business of assessing student learning outcomes and conducting local general education program assessment lies as always in the hands of the colleges, the disciplines, and the faculty. The university provides tools, guidelines, tutorials, and resources on the Pathways website to support the colleges in their efforts to conduct program and student learning outcomes assessment at the local level.

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.