

# Course Characteristics And Learning Outcomes For General Education Courses

## I. General Education Core Requirements

1. *Students will demonstrate an understanding of the liberal arts and sciences through:*
  - a. Knowledge of the methods and theoretical approaches of the Arts, Humanities, Natural sciences, and Social sciences (A, H, N and S courses).
  - b. Appreciation of the languages, arts, literatures, cultures, or social or economic structures of peoples outside of the United States (I or F courses).
    - Courses in these General Education Core categories award at least 3 semester hours of credit. Courses satisfying part a are usually appropriate for freshmen and sophomores who do not have a background in the subject. Courses satisfying part b may require more advanced preparation.
    - Courses in these General Education core areas may also carry a single skills designation (Q, W, O or R) and/or Gender (G) or Race and Ethnicity designation (D). A course may not carry both G and D credit. A course may not carry both D and I credit. No course may carry more than three designations.
2. *Students will develop reflective reasoning skills, begin to develop university-level communication and research skills, and learn strategies for maintaining active, healthy lifestyles.*
  - Addressed through coursework in Civic Engagement, College English, Information Literacy and Physical Fitness.

## Category definitions for General Education Core

**Arts** courses develop aesthetic awareness, offer practice in artistic skills, and/or promote analytical abilities through an introduction to the visual arts, music, dance, creative writing, film and theater. Students gain experience in the practice of an artistic form or learn to express their understanding of the arts and their critical sensitivity through the interpretation of diverse forms of art.

**Humanities** courses study human beings and their cultures through examination of their histories, philosophies, religions, and literatures. Students who complete humanities courses increase their knowledge of the critical methods used in these disciplines while developing their ability to interpret and analyze texts and primary sources as well as synthesize this information and effectively communicate their findings.

**Natural Sciences** courses study the natural world through inferences based on systematic observations and controlled experiments. Students who complete these courses increase their knowledge of the critical methods used in such disciplines as biology, chemistry, physics, and experimental psychology and develop a greater understanding of their physical environment, the laws that govern it, and the methods by which these laws are discovered.

**Social Sciences** courses seek to explore, describe, explain, and predict phenomena in human society through investigation of economic, political, and social behavior. Students increase their knowledge of the critical methods used in anthropology, economics, political science, sociology, psychology, and other social science disciplines. Students learn to evaluate the degree to which theories or conclusions about human behavior and society are based on sufficient empirical evidence obtained from experimentation, systematic observation, interviews, and/ or surveys and questionnaires.

**International / Foreign Language** courses consist of foreign language study as well as courses that introduce students to contemporary cultures and social, political, and economic systems outside of the United States. A May term study abroad course could be awarded an International course credit if the course includes academic inquiry that develops this knowledge.

- A student who completes a full semester of study abroad (minimum of 12 weeks of coursework) fulfills the entire international requirement, regardless of the courses taken at their place of study.
- A student who completes a short course of study abroad (minimum of 6 weeks of coursework) fulfills one course of the international requirement, regardless of the courses taken at their place of study.
- International degree-seeking students at MBU automatically meet the entire requirement

**Civic Engagement (C):** As engaged citizens, MBU graduates will be actively involved in the communities where they live and work, contributing professionally and personally to enhance the common good. The objective of this requirement is to provide opportunities for experiential learning that connect course concepts with community issues. Courses and internships that provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with members of the larger community as an intentional way of deepening understanding of course content, bridging theory and practice, may meet this requirement.

**Physical Fitness and Health (P):** The physical fitness and health requirement provides students with the knowledge and ability to maintain active and healthy lifestyles.

## II. **Additional Requirements: Engaging diverse viewpoints and developing skills**

*Students will demonstrate an understanding of self in relationship to the broader community through coursework that exposes them to diverse viewpoints. Students will develop skills appropriate to a university graduate in quantitative reasoning and written and oral communication.*

**Race & Ethnicity in the US (D):** Courses for this requirement build awareness of the role race and ethnicity have played and continue to play in the United States. The objective of this coursework is to broaden the perspective from which students understand American culture.

**Gender (G):** Students in an historic women's college should understand the role gender has played and continues to play in culture. The objective of this coursework is to critically identify and analyze gender/women's issues and their impact on society.

**Writing (W)** courses include frequent (usually weekly) formal and informal writing assignments and at least two formal writing assignments requiring multiple drafts and revisions based on feedback from the course instructor.

**Oral Communication (O)** courses provide multiple structured opportunities for students to explore and express ideas orally (e.g. class debates, presentations, leading peer discussion, etc.) and to receive feedback from the instructor. The course includes at least one assignment for which a substantial percentage of the grade is based on the quality of the oral presentation

**Quantitative Reasoning (Q)** courses offer instruction in quantitative analysis, logic, and/or mathematics, with frequent opportunities for students to interpret and understand the world using charts, graphs, probability and statistics, symbolic reasoning, logical deduction, and other quantitative measures.

## III. **Coursework required by all majors at Mary Baldwin University**

*Students will demonstrate mastery of subject matter, communication abilities, and the accumulation of the critical, creative, and reflective reasoning skills through the completion of a senior project.*

**Research (R )** courses build on skills developed in INT 103 (Information Literacy) and prepare students for the Major Project course by refining the ability of students to locate, critically evaluate, and use information effectively. These courses require students to demonstrate an understanding of the research process, teach how to access information effectively from a variety of sources, provide guidance on evaluating information critically, and provide instruction on proper documentation and citation of sources.

**Major Project (M):** Students address an authentic problem in their major using techniques, theory, and evidence appropriate to their field of study. This requirement is usually met through a senior thesis, senior project, or an interdisciplinary Honors Thesis. Departments may not place any other General Education Designations in the Major Project course: students are expected to have acquired these skills and experiences before participating in the M course.

### **Major Project**

All graduates must complete a major project for a minimum of three and a maximum of six semester hours of credit. It will carry a letter grade. The major project must be supervised and evaluated by full-time faculty in the discipline unless they approve some other method of supervision and evaluation. The purpose of the major project is to serve as a context within which students may establish themselves as persons capable of independent scholarship on a significant level. Disciplines choose among the following options:

- Write and defend (orally or in writing) a thesis reflecting scholarship and originality appropriate to the baccalaureate level of study.
- Complete and report on a project that synthesizes learning and entails an application of that learning to a task or problem of major academic significance
- Produce and present a creative work or body of work, demonstrating mastery of a medium and an understanding of the creative problems and potential inherent in that work
- Participate in a special course designed to make the student synthesize and draw conclusions from the various methods and materials in the student's field
- Develop an alternate method for the consideration and approval of faculty in the discipline

Students must have a grade point average in the major equal to or greater than 2.0, or approval of major faculty, to register for the major project. Except in the case of special courses that fulfill the senior requirement, the student should file and get approval of his/her senior requirement by faculty in the discipline by the end of the fall of the senior year. In the absence of special permission to the contrary, all major projects are supervised and evaluated by ranked teaching faculty at MBU. Major Projects are listed on the student's transcript as Major Project: (title) with grade. Major projects that, according to their majors' guidelines, are deemed particularly meritorious are designated "With Distinction," and this achievement is noted on the transcript.