

WCSU General Education Framework

General Description

In this competency-based approach to general education, students are expected to develop a variety of skills and perspectives that fully prepare them for lifelong learning. We focus on 10 essential competencies, which may be developed in the student's major or any other discipline offering a course with the designated competency. Courses may satisfy up to two competencies.

While some competencies are considered foundations and must be completed early in the student's education, the rest may be taken any time prior to graduation. Students are required to take at least three courses that focus on competency in writing, take at least one FY course, and to take two courses that focus on each of three more of the competencies before they complete 60 credits. Students must take courses that focus on all ten competencies before they graduate and complete a culminating general education experience (often a capstone within the major).

We allow students to satisfy competency requirements in any discipline because we know that learning is most effective when it is connected to a topic that is important to the student. Similarly, we require students to complete 40 credits of liberal arts curriculum outside of their major. These 40 credits are meant to ensure that students graduate with a balance of major and general liberal arts knowledge. There are no limits on any particular liberal arts category because we want students to have the broadest opportunities to develop their interests and create connections between their majors and potential minors.

Rationale

The American Association of Colleges and Universities challenges institutions to provide an education marked by breadth and rigor. A liberal arts education such as this should encourage students to adopt a way of thinking about knowledge and the world rather than narrow focus to specific disciplines or categories. At WCSU and other institutions, the current distribution model is based on traditional general education categories delivered by specific departments that are aligned with specific disciplines. Students are now required to take a certain number of courses within each category to meet the requirements for general education, in addition to courses required for their major and/or minor. Over the years, this system has resulted in a burdensome bureaucracy, where both students and faculty struggle to understand layers of rules and exceptions to those rules. The adoption of a tiered, competency-based approach to general education will return WCSU to the fundamental principles of a liberal arts education based on attaining essential competencies while serving as a foundation for the student's major area of discipline and as the basis for lifelong learning.

- Competency-based liberal arts education moves the delivery of information and experiences in a competency area from a single specific course or department to many possible courses or departments.
- Competency-based liberal arts education allows for greater flexibility at an institution such as WCSU, which focuses not only on traditional liberal arts students but on students (traditional and nontraditional) enrolled in strong professional programs as well.

10 Competencies

1. **First Year Navigation (FY)**
2. **Writing Intensive (WI)**
3. **Quantitative Reasoning (QR)**
4. **Creative Process (CP)**
5. **Critical Thinking (CT)**
6. **Oral Communication (OC)**
7. **Health and Wellness (HW):**
8. **Scientific Inquiry (SI)**
9. **Intercultural Competence (IC)**
10. **Information Literacy (IL)**

Structure of the Program

Competencies to be completed within the first 30 credits

- **First Year Navigation**
- **Writing 101**
- **Three additional competencies.**

Competencies to be completed within the first 60 credits

- **Writing 2:** This is a student's second exposure to the writing competency. It may be taken within a student's major or not. It shall focus on research.
- **A second encounter with each of the three additional competencies from above.**

Competencies to be completed prior to graduation

- **Writing 3:** This is a student's third exposure to the writing competency. This should be taken within the major and can be a part of the student's culminating experience.
- **The rest of the ten competencies not already encountered**
- **Culminating General Education Experience:** This may be satisfied by a major capstone.