

First Year Course Requirement

Rationale

Students enter Macalester with a wide range of experiences and expectations. Many have only a vague notion of what a liberal arts college is all about. It is critical for the students' success at Macalester that they receive extra guidance during their first semester to help them adjust to Macalester's expectations and philosophy. The First Year Course requirement is designed to help incoming students in their transition to college, specifically to the liberal arts model, and to Macalester's academic expectations of them. All First Year Courses have a common emphasis on college-level writing and basic library research skills. A critical component of the program is the role of the faculty member as adviser to the students. The goals of the First Year Course requirement are:

- To introduce students to critical inquiry within at least one discipline or interdisciplinary area.
- To instruct students in college level writing (including multiple drafts and appropriate citation of source materials) and library research skills.
- To help students adjust to Macalester's academic expectations.
- To connect incoming students to advisers who get to know the students well from the start.
- To provide a supportive community of other first-year students with shared interests and experiences to aid in the transition to college.

Motion: EPAG moves that the Faculty endorse the refined description (statement, course approval criteria) of the First Year Course Requirement as follows:

First Year Course Requirement: *One First Year Course completed during the first semester.*

Course Approval Criteria

Courses fulfilling the First Year Course Requirement:

1. May either be regular course offerings or a specially designed first-year course. Regular course offerings are likely to require modification to meet the criteria of a FYC.
2. Will enroll no more than 16 students with registration reserved for entering first year students.
3. The instructor will be assigned as the students' adviser.
4. Will participate in the library instruction program to ensure that all students learn to effectively utilize Macalester's resources.
5. Will include at least one writing assignment that is evaluated for both content and writing style/mechanics. It is strongly recommended that the writing include drafting and revising a paper, researching and citing sources, formulating an argument, and instructor feedback.
6. Will include attention to the development of academic skills (e.g. critical thinking, speaking, problem-solving, discussion, goal-setting) essential for success in college.

Capstone Experience Requirement

Rationale

The purpose of the *capstone experience* is for students to demonstrate their proficiency in the methods and modes of communication of the discipline or interdiscipline in which they have majored. Proficiency is demonstrated through the creation or performance advanced work. In addition to receiving faculty evaluation and response, the advanced project is peer-reviewed so that all students in the major are encouraged to reflect on what constitutes acceptable, good, and excellent work at this point in their academic lives. Furthermore, the advanced work should be shared with the Macalester community through public presentations and performances, thereby providing opportunities for celebrating the range of scholarly achievements engendered by a Macalester education.

Motion: EPAG moves that the Faculty endorse the refined description (statement, approval guidelines) of the Capstone Experience Requirement as follows:

Capstone Experience Requirement: *A course or advanced academic experience that represents a culmination of the learning process within the major.*

Course/Experience Approval Guidelines

Specific requirements for the capstone experience are to be determined by each department or interdepartmental major, subject to the *guidelines* given below and to approval by EPAG. For a student pursuing an individually designed interdepartmental major (IDIM), a description of how the capstone experience is to be completed must be approved as part of the IDIM proposal.

1. The department or interdepartmental major may choose to place the capstone requirement within the context of a seminar, specific courses, an independent or honors project, or any combination of these. While the capstone experience is to represent the final stage in the developmental sequence of the major, this does not preclude the possibility that some, or even most of the experience may occur prior to the senior year.
2. The capstone experience must lead to peer-reviewed advanced work appropriate to the discipline/interdiscipline. This could be a paper synthesizing contemporary theory/research, a work of public scholarship, a paper that presents original research, a recital or creation of an original written, visual or performative work.
3. The nature of, and weight given to the peer-review process is at the discretion of the department or interdepartmental major. Thus, for example, review might be restricted to a small number of students within a senior seminar, or all majors in this discipline might participate in the peer-review process. The peer-review process should be accompanied by instruction in how to evaluate peer colleagues' work and how to give constructive feedback.
4. The culminating works of the capstone experience should be made available to the Macalester community, ideally through public presentations and performances. How these works are disseminated is left to the discretion of the department or interdepartmental major.

Writing Requirement

Rationale

Macalester seeks to ensure that all students receive instruction in writing that gives attention to writing as a process (writing is rewriting), and that provides students individually with feedback on the mechanics and substance of their writing. While First Year Courses assists students in making a transition to college writing along with myriad aspects of college study, each student is required to take at least one additional course with a W designation, in which they will hone their writing skills and go through a process of evaluation and rewriting.

Writing instruction at Macalester aims at ensuring that students learn:

- How to plan, draft, and revise a college-level paper.
- How to construct an argument.
- How to organize an essay.
- How to use argumentation and evidence to support claims.
- How to adapt the style, vocabulary, and tone of a piece of writing to its anticipated audience and context.
- How to cite evidence using a standard citation style, such as MLA, APA, CMS, or CBE
- How to build a list of works cited using a standard citation style, such as MLA, APA, CMS, or CBE.
- The importance of clarity, proper grammar, usage, and style in academic writing.

Motion: EPAG moves that the Faculty endorse the refined description (statement, course approval criteria) of the Writing Requirement as follows:

Writing Requirement: *Four (4) semester hours after the First Year Course and prior to the senior year earned in a course designated as meeting the Writing (W) requirement.*

Course Approval Criteria

Courses fulfilling the Writing Requirement will include:

- 1) Three or more writing assignments during the semester (at least one of which is an academic argument) or one larger research or term paper.
- 2) At least one writing assignment that undergoes revision based on faculty feedback. At a minimum this feedback should include comments that address content (e.g. questions of organization, development of arguments, use of evidence, consideration of audience, paragraph structure and flow), clarity and style, as well as mechanics, such as grammar and proper usage.
- 3) Evaluation of writing assignments that reflects writing quality as well as content mastery.
- 4) Discussion of writing processes, desired qualities of writing, or writing for different audiences.

Quantitative Thinking Requirement

Rationale

Quantitative thinking (QT) skills are an essential component of a liberal education. Critical thinking incorporates both qualitative and quantitative evidence and evaluation. In some fields quantitative approaches play a central role, while qualitative thinking dominates in others. Despite these differences in emphasis, critical thinking skills learned in one area often carry over and reinforce those learned in other areas. It is for this reason that the breadth of experience associated with a liberal arts education prepares students effectively to be active participants and leaders in government, civil society, business, and academia.

Many policy debates, scientific discussions, political issues, and personal and organizational decisions involve judgments about claims based upon quantitative evidence. To evaluate these claims, the individual must have basic familiarity with such concepts as counting, measurement, estimation, and data analysis. Equally important is the capacity to ask and answer questions in a manner appropriate to these quantitative tools and to understand when the use of quantitative tools is or is not appropriate. The purpose of the QT requirement is to ensure that students have the opportunity to develop such skills. Students should learn approaches to collecting, interpreting, and presenting information about the world based on numerical, logical, and statistical skills. These topics arise in a wide range of areas, and we invite faculty from a range of disciplines to teach courses that contribute to QT.

Motion: EPAG moves that the Faculty endorse the refined description (statement, course approval criteria) of the Quantitative Thinking as follows:

Quantitative Thinking Requirement: One or more course(s) that provide(s) broad exposure to a set of critical thinking skills of importance to individual and civic discourse and decision-making. Quantitative thinking consists of sophisticated reasoning built upon numerical, logical, and statistical skills.”

Students may take one or more courses with a Q3, Q2, or Q1 designation. (The number indicates how broadly the course covers quantitative concepts.) A single Q3 course completely satisfies the requirement, but some students may prefer to satisfy the requirement by taking a Q2 course together with any other Q2 or Q1 course, or by taking three Q1 courses.

- Q3** The great majority of material covered in Q3 course focuses on quantitative topics, and these courses will cover all or nearly all of the learning goals listed below.
- Q2** At least half of the material covered in Q2 courses will focus on quantitative topics, and these courses will cover the majority of learning goals listed below.
- Q1** Some range of quantitative topics are covered in Q1 courses, and quantitative thinking elements represent some of the overall material covered in the course.

Course Approval Criteria

QT courses (content, pedagogy, activities, assessment) will provide opportunities for students to enhance their abilities in the following areas:

- Describing the world quantitatively
- Evaluating sources and quality of data
- Distinguishing association from causation
- Understanding trade-offs,
- Understanding uncertainty and risk
- Using estimation and modeling to evaluate claims and test theories.

(These learning goals are explained in greater detail on the following page.)

Learning Goals

- **Describing the World Quantitatively:** Much of quantitative thinking involves quantitative or statistical descriptions of social and natural phenomena. This includes descriptions of patterns and variations and rates of change, such as linear or exponential growth. Understanding descriptive statistics and the various modes of presentation of quantitative data is central. Students should be able to distinguish when quantitative approaches are appropriate and when they are not.
- **Evaluating Sources and Quality of Data:** Students of quantitative thinking should also understand the sources of data, including the processes of collecting or producing data. This may involve understanding how to assess the reliability and validity of measurements and elements of probability and sampling, including sources of bias and error.
- **Association and Causation:** The quantitative thinker knows the ways that associations between factors are established by observation, experiment or quasi-experiment. It is important to be able to establish the meaning of an association or correlation and learn the protocols for weighing the statistical significance and theoretical importance of findings, including inferring causation.
- **Trade-Offs:** Most decisions, whether public or private, individual or societal, may be thought of as involving conflicting goals. Much of the debate on public issues involves disagreement about the value of the different goals. Where there are conflicting goals, quantitative thinking offers techniques for weighing the relative impact of policy options. While there rarely is a single correct outcome in the face of such conflicts, the quantitative thinkers can bring measure and balance to policy discussion.
- **Uncertainty and Risk:** Few things in life are certain; decisions and debate often revolve around unknowns. The quantitative thinker possesses skills that can be used to assess, compare and balance risks, and understands the limits and strengths of these techniques. The quantitative thinker knows that, in the face of the unknown, if not the unknowable, we often rely on conditional statements and probabilities in making decisions and can evaluate conclusions drawn from conditional statements.
- **Estimation, Modeling, and Scale:** The quantitative thinker understands that quantities vary over huge ranges; ‘big’ and ‘small’ are not absolute notions but depend on context or scale. Quantitative thinkers appreciate the value and limitations of abstracting out detail—constructing models—and that the sensitivity of model results to assumptions can and should be reported along with the model results.

Internationalism Requirement

Rationale

A rich campus life, language acquisition, study away, and interaction with diverse students and faculty all contribute to students' intellectual and experiential grasp of difference and of their own place in relation to the "other" and the world. In this context, the Internationalism and U.S. Multiculturalism graduation requirements are designed to prepare students to contribute as members of a thoughtful and principled citizenry in a global society. These courses provide specific knowledge about the complexity of internationalism and multiculturalism abroad, in the U.S., and in the rich campus and local communities in which Macalester participates. While internationalism and multiculturalism are distinguished as two components of the College mission, in reality they are intertwined. Peoples divided by national boundaries may, for example, be more homogeneous culturally and linguistically than peoples within a nation like the United States. Systems of power and privilege that help create and maintain hierarchical relations among peoples operate within the U.S. and other nations, among nations, and between the U.S. and the rest of the world. All lives are shaped by historical dynamics and contemporary structures that operate on transnational, international, and global levels. Macalester's two-part requirement recognizes not only the conceptual interconnectedness of internationalism and multiculturalism, but also the need for students to engage with complexities of difference within the community where they live and work, as well as within an international and global context. In learning about other peoples, cultures and global systems one dislodges presuppositions about others and, crucially, about one's individual and collective self.

Motion: EPAG moves that the Faculty endorse the refined description (statement, course approval criteria) of the Internationalism Requirement as follows:

Internationalism Requirement: *At least one course devoted to the study of (a) non-U.S. peoples, societies, or perspectives; (b) key international/transnational structures, institutions, discourses, practices and relationships that constitute world order; and/or (c) important ethical questions specific to the international domain.*

Course Approval Criteria

The majority of the course (content, pedagogy, activities, assessment) will provide opportunities for students to develop one or more of the following:

- 1) an understanding of societies or cultures beyond the borders of the U.S. and/or a familiarity with non-U.S. perspectives on social, cultural, scientific, or aesthetic matters;
- 2) an understanding of the key structures, institutions, discourses and practices that constitute world order;
- 3) A comparative and/or historical analysis of large-scale phenomena such as diasporas, development, globalization, or distributions of power and resources; and/or
- 4) an understanding of the ethical dimensions of international life.

U.S. Multiculturalism Requirement

Rationale

A rich campus life, language acquisition, study away, and interaction with diverse students and faculty all contribute to students' intellectual and experiential grasp of difference and of their own place in relation to the "other" and the world. In this context, the U.S. Multiculturalism and Internationalism graduation requirements are designed to prepare students to contribute as members of a thoughtful and principled citizenry in a global society. These courses provide specific knowledge about the complexity of internationalism and multiculturalism abroad, in the U.S., and in the rich campus and local communities in which Macalester participates. While internationalism and multiculturalism are distinguished as two components of the College mission, in reality they are intertwined. Peoples divided by national boundaries may, for example, be more homogeneous culturally and linguistically than peoples within a nation like the United States. Systems of power and privilege that help create and maintain hierarchical relations among peoples operate within the U.S. and other nations, among nations, and between the U.S. and the rest of the world. All lives are shaped by historical dynamics and contemporary structures that operate on transnational, international, and global levels. Macalester's two-part requirement recognizes not only the conceptual interconnectedness of internationalism and multiculturalism, but also the need for students to engage with complexities of difference within the community where they live and work, as well as within an international and global context. In learning about other peoples, cultures and global systems one dislodges presuppositions about others and, crucially, about one's individual and collective self.

Motion: EPAG moves that the Faculty endorse the refined description (statement, course approval criteria) of the U.S. Multiculturalism Requirement as follows:

U.S. Multiculturalism Requirement: *At least one course devoted to the study of social groups (e.g. based on race, religion, class, gender, sexuality, language, national origin) in the U.S.; including analysis of forces that create, contest, or maintain power, identity, or difference.*

Course Approval Criteria

The majority of the course (content, pedagogy, activities, assessment) will provide opportunities for students to develop:

- 1) An understanding of the varied experiences and contributions of social groups in the U.S.;
- 2) An understanding of the interrelationships among social groups in the U.S., and how these work to shape complex, dynamic identities and social realities;
- 3) An understanding of the ways in which unequal distributions of power and resources have developed and continue to affect people in the U.S.; and
- 4) An understanding of efforts to promote agency, equity, and social justice within the U.S.

General Education Requirements (GER) Implementation Recommendations

Motion: EPAG moves that the Faculty endorse the following set of recommendations to support implementation and continuing development of the new and revised graduation requirements.

I. Course Approval

1. For requirements either new to the General Education Curriculum or significantly revised—Multiculturalism [M], Internationalism [I], Quantitative Thinking [QT], Writing [W]—we propose that four separate *General Education Subcommittees* be established.
2. Similar to the subcommittee structure currently in place (e.g. IDIM, Study Away), each proposed subcommittee will be comprised of four members. One representative from EPAG will be joined by two faculty members and one staff member appointed by the Provost in consultation with EPAG. The staff person will be responsible for coordinating the administrative duties associated with the approval process. Faculty members will be asked to accept Subcommittee assignments for two-year terms with the option to continue beyond the second year.
3. The duties of each General Education Subcommittee will be to:
 - a. Review course proposals and recommend courses for approval to EPAG;
 - b. Assist EPAG in responding to issues raised by transfer students, student requests for retroactive approval or approval for courses taken during study abroad/study away, etc.
 - c. Assist with the design and implementation of professional development opportunities in consultation with the CST and other relevant College programs, offices, and individuals; and
 - d. Assist in evaluating whether the goals of the requirement are being fulfilled on an institutional basis in consultation with relevant College programs, offices, and individuals.
4. The course approval process shall be consistent across all Subcommittees.
5. Each Subcommittee will evaluate and recommend sections of courses for approval on a semester basis.
6. Requests for approval should be made no later than October 15th for courses offered in spring semester and no later than March 15th for courses offered in fall semester. The course approval form will require descriptive information about the proposed course and a brief statement of how the course fulfills the course approval criteria.
7. Approved courses will be granted continuing approval unless there is significant change in the course content or structure that will necessitate resubmission to the appropriate Subcommittee for re-evaluation.

8. To strengthen academic advising and support student planning and access to courses, prior to the registration period each semester the Registrar shall post a list of all courses that fulfill M, I, QT, and W requirements to be offered the following term.

II. Faculty Participation

1. To encourage widespread and sustained faculty participation, we propose that courses fulfilling general education requirements be acknowledged as important curricular contributions through yearly addenda and personnel processes.
2. To support shared responsibility and equal opportunity for faculty to participate, we propose that Department Chairs work with the Provost to anticipate and address workload equity issues that arise on an individual and a department basis.
3. To support continuing curricular renewal, collaboration, and innovation with respect to the general education requirements, we propose that faculty be encouraged to participate in varied professional development opportunities responsive to their specific interests and evolving experience and expertise. Included might be:
 - a. access to faculty with significant academic preparation and teaching experience who would be available to work with faculty colleagues at their request, on a one-on-one basis, to support course development and implementation;
 - b. focused presentations or discussion sessions regarding challenges specific to teaching approved courses;
 - c. brief intensive course development workshops (3-4 half days), offered in January or late May;
 - d. semester long reading/reflection/mutual support seminars for faculty engaged in teaching courses approved courses and those considering participation; and
 - e. support to attend relevant regional/national/international conferences or workshops
4. Participation in professional development activities should be compensated with release time, FTR, or stipends as appropriate; and acknowledged as an important contribution via yearly addenda and personnel processes.

III. Sunset Clause

EPAG recommends that *the graduation requirements be evaluated after a trial period of five years* (Fall 2011) at which time each requirement may: 1) continue as approved for implementation beginning Fall 2007; 2) be revised based on feedback from the first four years; or 3) be eliminated as a graduation requirement. We further recommend that the General Education Subcommittee structure be re-evaluated concurrently.