

# GENERAL EDUCATION

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## General Education at the University of Maryland

Through the General Education program you will discover that education at the University of Maryland is an experience that reaches from the campus classroom and lab to across the globe. As a student you will engage with that larger universe by acquiring new skills and understandings. General Education exposes you to different disciplines, improves your fundamental academic skills, and strengthens your commitment to using knowledge and abilities to better yourself and others.

The General Education program will assist you in preparing for a new "multiverse" of learning, and for the demanding and constantly changing world beyond graduation. It provides necessary skills and basic knowledge, complements and expands the university's course offerings, and connects you more fully to the intellectual community of the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan area, the nation, and the world beyond.

## General Education Program Goals for All Students

- Develop the skills necessary to succeed in academic careers and in professional lives by establishing habits and understanding of clear writing, effective speaking and presentation, and critical and analytic reasoning.
- Strengthen knowledge in major areas of study.
- Broaden knowledge of civilizations past and present.
- Establish the ability to thrive both intellectually and materially and to support themselves, their families, and their communities through a broad understanding of the world in which they live and work.
- Define the ethical imperatives necessary to create a just society in their own communities and in the larger world.

## Important Notes: General Education Courses

- **Must** be selected from the courses coded as meeting General Education requirements. See list of approved General Education courses at Testudo (<https://app.testudo.umd.edu/soc/gen-ed/>). Click on the General Education list for the term you wish to explore.
- **May** also be used to satisfy college, major, and/or supporting area requirements
- **May not** be taken on a Pass-Fail basis.

For information about general education requirements prior to the 2012-2013 academic year please email [gened@umd.edu](mailto:gened@umd.edu).

## REQUIREMENTS

### Elements of the General Education Program

The General Education program is comprised of courses that build foundational skills (Fundamental Studies (p. 1)), courses that expand the breadth of your education (Distributive Studies (p. 2)) and courses that explore and study human, societal and cultural differences (Diversity (p. 2)). At least two of your Distributive Studies courses will delve in to a "Big Question" as seen through the lens of a particular academic discipline (Big Question (p. 2)).

### Fundamental Studies

*Master the skills.*

The Fundamental Studies portion of the General Education program consists of 5 courses (nominally 15 credits), with one course in each of the following areas:

- Academic Writing (p. 1)<sup>1</sup>
- Analytic Reasoning (p. 1)
- Mathematics (p. 1)<sup>1</sup>
- Oral Communication (p. 1)
- Professional Writing (p. 1)

### Academic Writing

The *Academic Writing* requirement prepares students with a foundational understanding of the writing skills needed for success in further studies at Maryland and beyond. All students must earn a grade of C- or better in *Academic Writing* in order to meet this General Education requirement.<sup>1</sup>

### Analytic Reasoning

Courses in *Analytic Reasoning* foster a student's ability to use mathematical or formal methods or structured protocols and patterns of reasoning to examine problems or issues by evaluating evidence, examining proofs, analyzing relationships between variables, developing arguments, and drawing conclusions appropriately.

### Mathematics

The goal of the *Mathematics* requirement is to convey the power of mathematics, demonstrated by the variety of problems that can be modeled and solved by quantitative means. Ability in mathematics is a critical measure of how well students are prepared to meet the challenges they will face in their lives beyond school.<sup>1</sup>

### Oral Communication

Human relationships, from the most formal to the most personal, rest in large measure on skilled listening and effective speaking. Skillful listening and speaking support success in personal relationships, educational undertakings, professional advancement, and civic engagement.

### Professional Writing

The *Professional Writing* requirement strengthens writing skills and prepares students for the range of writing expected of them after graduation.

<sup>1</sup> These course must be attempted by 30 credits and successfully completed by 60 credits.

## Distributive Studies

*Experience a variety of disciplines.*

A truly well-rounded education consists not only of courses within your major area of study, but also exposure to a wide variety of subjects and ways of thinking. The General Education program accomplishes this through its Distributive Studies courses. You will be able to follow your interests outside of your major, explore the many different opportunities available at the university, learn new skills and ways of study, and apply existing skills in new contexts. The Distributive Studies requirement consists of 8 courses (nominally 25 credits), with 2 courses in each of the following 4 areas:

- History and Social Sciences (p. 2)
- Humanities (p. 2)
- Natural Sciences (p. 2)
- Scholarship in Practice (p. 2)

### History and Social Science

*History and Social Science* courses introduce students to history and to the social science disciplines, with their combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. They include courses in criminology, economics, history, psychology, sociology, and other social sciences.

### Humanities

*Humanities* courses study the history and the genres of human creativity. They include courses in literatures in any language, art and art history, classics, and music and music history, as well as in the disciplines of linguistics and philosophy, among others.

### Natural Sciences

*Natural Science* courses introduce the concepts and methods of studying the natural world. Courses include the traditional physical and life sciences, environmental science, animal and avian science, and plant science, among others. **One of the two courses selected must include a substantial, rigorous laboratory experience.**

### Scholarship in Practice

*Scholarship in Practice* courses engage students in applying a body of knowledge to create professional products or works of art. Architecture, business, education, engineering, and journalism offer courses that lead to products such as architectural designs, new technologies, innovative publications, new computer software, business plans, advertising campaigns, educational curricula, and bioengineering. Creative and artistic performance courses lead students to produce writing portfolios, plays, operas, dance productions, art exhibits, and creative media. Scholarship in Practice also includes courses that combine competency in speaking, writing, and translation in a foreign language. **One of the two Scholarship in Practice courses selected must be outside the student's major requirements.**

## Big Question Courses (formerly I-Series)

*Explore Big Questions from a unique suite of courses that form the cornerstone of Distributive Studies.*

**The Big Question courses are the signature of General Education at the University of Maryland.** Big Question courses are lively and contemporary. They speak to important issues that spark the imagination, demand intellect, and inspire innovation. They challenge students to wrestle with big questions, and examine the ways that different disciplines address them. Big Question courses are not surveys of particular fields of knowledge. Instead, Big Question courses provide students with the

basic concepts, approaches, and vocabulary of particular disciplines and fields of study as well as an understanding of how experts in those disciplines and fields employ terms, concepts, and approaches. **Two of the eight courses used to satisfy the Distributive Studies requirement must be Big Question courses.**

## Diversity

*Explore human, social, and cultural differences.*

The Diversity component of the General Education requirement consists of courses in the following two areas:

- Understanding Plural Societies (p. 2)
- Cultural Competence (p. 2)

### Understanding Plural Societies

Life in a globally competitive society of the twenty-first century requires an ability to comprehend both theoretical and practical dimensions of human difference. From that perspective, *Understanding Plural Societies* is the centerpiece of the university's Diversity requirement. Courses in this category speak to both the foundations—cultural, material, psychological, historical, social, and biological—of human difference and the operation or function of plural societies.

### Cultural Competence

Cultural competence provides opportunities to gain an increased understanding of cultures and cultural practices, while learning to communicate effectively across cultural differences in a diverse society and world. This diversity category reflects a developmental, on-going process through which students learn about the lived experiences of individuals as members of socio-cultural groups and the complex interactions between groups. *Cultural Competence* courses emphasize acquisition of new knowledge, thoughtful consideration of issues of equity and justice, critical thinking, self-reflection, empathy, engaged global citizenship, and the development of skills necessary to work effectively with individuals, groups, and teams from diverse identities and perspectives.

To fulfill the Diversity requirement, students must complete:

- Two *Understanding Plural Societies* courses
- OR
- One *Understanding Plural Societies* course and one *Cultural Competence* course

Courses fulfilling the Diversity requirement may double-count in an approved Distributive Studies category.

## More Information

- To view the General Education Requirement Checklist and other resources, see: <http://gened.umd.edu/students/student-resources/>.
- To view Frequently Asked Questions, see: <http://gened.umd.edu/faqs-gened.html>.