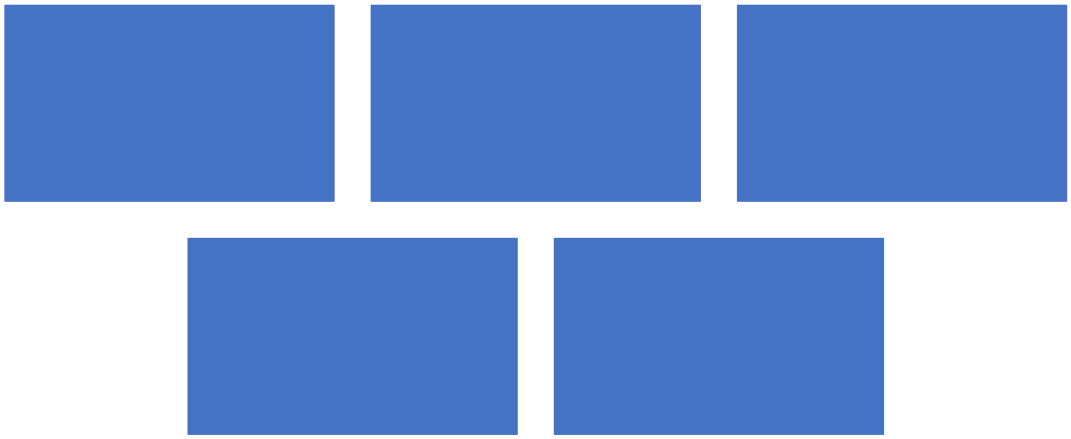
Developing Inquiring Minds | Sparking Curiosity | Building Professional Presence

Built around the development of nine Core Competencies, students will complete 36-credit hours of coursework across a variety of disciplines. Each course will engage students in exploring important questions and problems, introducing them to the methods and standards of the discipline along the way and assessing their experience with signature assignments. provide a further opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of an important issue and strengthen a sense of community with their peers by completing three core courses around a shared theme.

In 2022 CSU's Faculty Senate initiated a review and update of the general education system. Members of the initial Spring 2023 committee created the following guiding principles for the revision process.[1]



A Core Curricular education should prepare all students for success in life and whatever career(s) they pursue after graduation. The Inquiry Core is designed around nine core competencies that reflect the demands of modern life and the skills most in demand among employers. With the Inquiry Core, CSU is promising that all students who complete the program will be…

1. Effective written communicators
2. Effective oral communication
3. Critical quantitative reasoners fluent in interpreting and using data
4. Efficient and ethical consumers and creators of information
5. Sophisticated users of digital technologies
6. Professional and constructive collaborators
7. Ethically conscious and responsible decision-makers

[1] For a complete list of ad hoc committee members and an overview of the curricular review process see Appendix D.

8. Culturally aware and civically minded members of local and global communities
9. Critical and creative thinkers

Each of these core competencies describes, at a high level, the learning outcomes of the Core Curriculum. Each is also further specified with sub-outcomes, derived from state guidance, AAC&U rubrics, and current research.

These Core Competencies update the existing GenEd 08 skill areas and unify them with the broader statement of the purpose of general education at CSU.

Core Curriculum courses will feature a signature assignment that assesses one or more of the core competencies outlined in the new curriculum.

The CSU Core Curriculum is a reimagining and updating of the general education system at Cleveland State University. It aims to provide a foundational education for all CSU students, organized around a minimum of 36 credit hours, divided into two categories: Foundations of Inquiry and Methods of Inquiry. Each category 2 course will include critical thinking as a core competency.

A central goal of the Core Curriculum is to help students develop the ability to assess and solve problems using diverse methods. Any student completing their core curriculum at CSU should be able to do this, but we are also introducing the option for students to complete part of their core through a series of courses investigating a similar topic or theme.

Core Curriculum courses may be

1. The course should be organized around big questions and/or problems that would be engaging to the students. The content and methods included in the course should be included to help students investigate those questions and/or problems.

2. The course should include ample opportunity for students to engage in some of the stages of inquiry. In practice, this means providing time in class for students to do the investigating and/or problem solving.

The overarching goal of the Inquiry Orientation is to

A Core Curriculum assessment program will be established by the Directors of Core Curriculum and Research & Assessment. Assessment, in this context, refers to a set of activities that measure, analyze, and evaluate student learning to gauge achievement of stated student learning outcomes. Meaningful assessment is the catalyst for the continuous improvement of the underpinnings of students' educational experiences.

Assessment in the Core Curriculum will be aimed at improving the core curricular educational experience for students. Since no single course or instructor is responsible for achievement of learning across the core curriculum, the use of assessment data as evidence of instructor performance is strictly prohibited.

Core curriculum assessment should be focused on the and should make use of the completed in each core curricular course as the basis for that assessment.

Given the complexity and time commitment required for the assurance of learning of the nine core competencies, a rotating and staggered assurance of learning plan should be used. The assessment plan should include three main components:

(M): Measurement of student learning, via the collection, evaluation, and reporting of outcomes

(R): Reporting of assessment data and recommendations for continuous improvement

(CI): The development, implementation, and reporting of continuous improvements

The table below provides a suggestive plan for assessment, beginning AY2026:

Written Comm	M1	R1	CI	CI	M2	R2	-	-	M1	R1	CI	CI
Oral Communication	M1	R1		CI	M2	R2	-	-	M1	R1	CI	CI
Quantitative Reasoning	M1	R1	CI	CI	M2	R2	-	-	M1	R1	CI	CI
Information Literacy	-	-	M1	R1	CI	CI	M2	R2	-	-	M1	R1
Digital Literacy	-	-	M1	R1	CI	CI	M2	R2	-	-	M1	R1

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and reporting will be largely the same as the first, but with an emphasis on reporting the results of any prior continuous improvements.

The Inquiry Core Curriculum is a reimagining of the Core Curriculum experience at CSU. Key features include the development of inquiry pathways, the inclusion of a 3-credit First Year Experience Course, and the addition of Signature Assignments built around nine Core Competencies. Students will complete 36-credit hours of coursework across a variety of disciplines. We look forward to collaborating with instructors and programs to create a distinctive core curriculum experience for all students at CSU.

> Global reality demands an ever greater ability to sort through mountains of information from all sorts of different fields.[6] And this information is often overlapping. To understand a single social or political issue will likely require understanding natural scientific facts but also how those facts overlap with social or political considerations and the broader social and historical context of the issue.

Courses in the core curriculum are required to be designed in a way that makes them inviting and accessible to first-year, non-major students. This is both a reflection of OT-36 requirements and grounded in an understanding of the role of a core curriculum/general education program in a student's overall university career. In practice, this means that core courses should not be designed as a major course, or with the expectation that the students in the course have or will in the future take additional courses in the same program. R

Sitting behind both integration and distinguishing the purpose of core courses is the idea that the core curriculum should be fundamentally about developing key competencies rather than learning a bunch of content. Of course, this does not mean content is not important. Rather, it simply suggests where the emphasis should lie. While a student majoring in your field will likely need to know a lot of specific content to succeed in later courses, graduate school, or specific industries, a student taking a core curricular course in your field has different needs. In particular, with the focus of the core curricular reform, we are suggesting they need to learn how to think in the ways your discipline privileges so they can use the tools of your discipline in their everyday lives. Doing this requires organizing a course less around covering specific content and more around ensuring students can work with whatever content they do learn. Why should that be the emphasis of a core curriculum?

Transferability is key.[8] The students taking a core course may never take another course in that same discipline. As a result, for the learning to matter to them at all, it will need to be capable of being transferred to other things they are doing. The best way to promote transferability is to practice transferring, and that comes from applying ideas to real-life or extra-disciplinary situations.

Covering content does not mean students are learning content.[9] Instead, knowledge must be "acted on" to be encoded in a way that constitutes long-term learning.[10] Decreasing the breadth of content (where possible) to emphasize depth and application thus enhances student learning. While this is not always possible for major courses due to externally-imposed requirements, it is possible in the core curriculum.

Promoting intrinsic motivation. Helping students see learning what they are learning is important, and it can help them with other things they care about can enhance their intrinsic motivation to participate in the course and learn the material.

As should be clear from these justifications, the updating and redesign of the core curriculum is fundamentally aimed at enhancing student success. This helps with student retention, improves classroom culture, produces more successful graduates, and all of that can lead to making CSU a more attractive proposition to students.

[8] Hanstedt (2012).

[9] Paul Gaston (2010). "Institutional Commitment," in . American Association of Colleges and Universities.

[10] Jerry G. Gaff & James L. Ratcliff (1996). . Jossey-Bass. See also J. Clark (2010). "Effective Pedagogy," in

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requirements for lab components. Courses in this category must be designed to develop and assess the core competencies of quantitative reasoning and collaboration.

courses will be designed to meet OT-36 learning outcomes for the natural sciences. They do not include a laboratory component. Courses in this category must be designed to develop and assess the core competencies of quantitative reasoning and information literacy.

courses will be designed to meet OT-36 learning outcomes for the social and behavioral sciences. They must be designed to develop and assess the core competencies of collaboration and information literacy.

courses aim to investigate aspects of social and cultural diversity in the United States or the world. Courses in this category must be designed to meet the OT-36 learning outcomes for "Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion. These courses should focus on the core competencies of intercultural knowledge and competence and written or oral communication.

courses provide students with two distinct options. Students may either complete a second quantitative & formal reasoning course, meeting OT-36 outcomes for a course in the "mathematics, statistics, and logic" OT-36 category, or complete a course satisfying OT-36 outcomes for "Social and Behavioral Sciences" and emphasizing the core competency of digital literacy. This may include, for instance, courses that emphasize the use of Microsoft Excel, Adobe Creative Cloud, or other digital technologies.

CSU's methodological outcomes reflect OT-36-approved areas of distribution for general education curriculum and includes English composition, mathematics, statistics, and logic, arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences.

All courses approved for a "Methodological Inquiry" category must:

Be offered at the 100- or 200-level;

Be inviting and accessible to non-majors; and

Engage students in inquiry using the techniques and methods of the discipline, rather than focus exclusively on content coverage

Courses must additionally incorporate all the learning outcomes associated with the relevant category as listed below.

Courses designated as fulfilling the OT36 Arts & Humanities requirements must provide opportunities for learners to achieve all the following learning outcomes:

1. Students will be able to employ principles, terminology, and methods from disciplines in the arts and humanities.
2. Students will be able to analyze, interpret, and/or evaluate primary works that are products of the human imagination and critical thought.
3. Students will be able to reflect on the creative process of products of the human imagination and critical thought.
4. Students will be able to explain relationships among cultural and/or historical contexts.
5. Students will be able to convey concepts and evidence related to humanistic endeavors clearly and effectively.

Courses designated as social or behavioral sciences will provide opportunities for learners to achieve all the following learning outcomes:

1. Students will be able to explain the primary terminology, concepts, and findings of the specific social and behavioral science discipline.
2. Students will be able to explain the primary theoretical approaches used in the specific social and behavioral science discipline.

Consistent with AAC&U's VALUE rubrics and the ACRL's Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education, CSU defines information literacy as the set of integrated abilities and mindsets enabling students to answer questions and solve problems by identifying information needs, discovering information strategically, understanding how information is created and valued, evaluating information critically, participating in conversations as knowledge creators, and using information ethically.

Courses, programs, or learning experiences designated as teaching information literacy will provide opportunities for learners to achieve the following five learning outcomes.

1. Effectively defines the scope of the research question, determining key concepts and perspectives.
2. Selects and utilizes appropriate tools to search for different types of information with a spirit of inquiry and discovery.
3. Strategically searches for information and assesses results, considering the multiple criteria relevant to evaluating the information in context.
4. Organizes, synthesizes, and articulates information from sources to generate new knowledge and/or achieve a specific purpose with clarity and depth.
5. Uses information ethically, providing complete and accurate citations. Paraphrases, summarizes, and quotes sources with fidelity to the original context. Distinguishes between common knowledge and ideas requiring attribution. Demonstrates understanding of the ethical and legal restrictions on the use of published, confidential, and/or proprietary information.

CSU defines digital literacy as a habit of mind, competency, and comfort in working with digital

At least 15% of the course grade should depend on some combination of (a) the student's evaluated performance as a team member and/or (b) the learner's evaluated learning about principles of successful teamwork.

A portion of course instruction should be dedicated to (a) effectively managing a team project/assignment (e.g., establishing roles, responsibilities, milestones, and timelines) and (b) developing interpersonal communication skills and cultural awareness to create a collaborative and inclusive team environment.

Learning Outcomes

Courses, programs, or learning experiences designated as teaching collaboration & teamwork will provide opportunities for learners to achieve the following five learning outcomes.

1. Students will be able to contribute ideas, solutions, and courses of action during team meetings.
2. Students will be able to engage other team members, constructively and respectfully.
3. Students will be able to provide meaningful contributions to the team that advances the work of the group.
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3. Students will be able to recognize, evaluate, and connect ethical issues.
4. Students will be able to apply ethical perspectives, theories, or concepts to a decision-making situation.
5. Students will be able to evaluate alternative ethical perspectives within a decision-making situation.

Consistent with AAC&U's VALUE rubrics, CSU defines intercultural knowledge and competence as "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts."

Consistent with ODHE requirements, students will be provided opportunities to:

1. Examine identity as multifaceted and constituting multiple categories of difference such as race, color, language, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, and intersectionality.
2. Investigate how cultures (including their own) are shaped by the intersection of a variety of factors such as race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, ethnicity, nationality, and/or other socially constructed categories of difference.
3. Recognize the complex elements of cultural biases on a global scale by identifying historic, economic, political, and/or social factors, such as ethnocentrism, colonialism, slavery, democracy, and imperialism.
4. Recognize how sociocultural status and access to (or distribution of) resources are informed by cultural practices within historical, social, cultural, and economic systems.

And at least one of the following:

5. Articulate the meaning of empathy and its role in strengthening civic responsibilities and reducing the negative impact of societal stereotypes.
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Part of the aim of this update is to make core curricular courses more interesting to students, and to help them see the value of what they are learning. To do that, all courses in the core curriculum should take an to course design and instruction. The inquiry orientation is inspired by, not but identical to, inquiry-based learning (IBL), a well-researched high impact approach to education that is used through primary, secondary, and tertiary education. The inquiry orientation of the core curriculum means that courses should be designed around helping students investigate important questions or problems using the content and methods of the discipline, rather than focusing solely on covering content.

Additionally, to ensure students receive ample opportunity to develop their inquiring minds, courses cannot be primarily focused on content coverage.

In practice, this will mean two things: Identifying a 'course narrative' that frames why students are learning what they are in terms of some sort of inquiry; and reducing the content of a 'survey' or major 'introductory' course by about 25% to provide room for the inquiry. Exactly how much (if at all) any given course will need to change along either of these dimensions will vary with the current nature of the course. Many courses are already framed around some sort of inquiry (even if it's implicit) and many already make plenty of room for skill development.

Courses in the CSU Core Curriculum should take an to their design. This inquiry orientation is inspired by, but not identical to, (IBL). More precisely, in line with IBL, the inquiry orientation emphasizes the active involvement of students in exploring and investigating real-world problems and questions.

The inquiry orientation is broadly aimed at promoting student success through sparking student curiosity, engaging them actively in the learning process, and helping them develop higher-order thinking skills. IBL has been shown, at the K-12 and university levels, to provide these and other benefits.

To assist faculty in adopting an inquiry orientation in their core courses, this document outlines the relevant aspects of Inquiry-Based Learning, provides an 'action plan' for designing an inquiry-orientl

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Core courses are not expected to reach this highest level of inquiry, but instead to start students on that pathway through various forms of . This is in line with IBL research that emphasizes the importance of scaffolding inquiry development. To understand the idea of structured inquiry, it is helpful to identify the various steps common to an inquiry process:

1. Identification of a topic of interest
2. Formulation of research question(s)
3. Gathering of resources aimed at investigating and answering the question(s)
4. Analyzing and evaluating the resources
5. Synthesizing information gained to answer, or better understand, the initial question(s)

While the highest level of inquiry, often called , would have students engage in all five steps in a largely self-directed manner, structured inquiry involves the instructor in completing, or at least providing significant guidance, in completing some of the steps.

A typical method of scaffolding structured inquiry involves beginning with structure for all five steps, and then removing or reducing the structure for the later steps while maintaining it for the earlier steps. For instance, we may identify an interesting question in our field (steps 1 and 2) that we will help students explore, provide them relevant readings or other materials (step 3), and then provide structured activities that help them complete steps (4) and/or (5). In this form of structured inquiry, students are beginning the process of critical thinking through the active engagement in steps (4) and (5).

Inquiry could then be further scaffolded by, for instance, providing activities that guide students through the gathering of resources for a pre-provided question, followed by additional practice with steps (4) and (5), perhaps with less structure or guidance than previously provided.

Throughout, we should aim for students to have the ability to engage in open inquiry by the end of the program, while pro

The review and updating of CSU's general education system was initiated by Faculty Senate in Fall 2022. A committee composed of 11 faculty and 4

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