

## The Manchester Core: A Program in the Liberal Arts

Manchester College seeks to develop in each student an appreciation for learning through an academic foundation grounded in the disciplines and in-depth study in specific majors. This combination prepares students for graduate school, the professions, and positions of leadership in all areas of society. A broad-based, flexible General Education curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences provides the most appropriate formal preparation to:

- meet contemporary challenges,
- fulfill career goals,
- lead a purposeful, healthy and rewarding life, and
- serve society as a responsible citizen.

The following guiding principles informed the development of this proposal by the General Education Committee:

- Foundational skills reinforced throughout the GE program, especially in the categories “Integration Into Our World,” “Ways of Knowing,” and “Synthesis and Critical Thinking.”
- less focus on designated courses and more focus on student learning outcomes.
- more student choice and flexibility; desire to have multiple courses available to meet any one GE requirement.
- more effective pedagogical practices
- size no larger than the current GE program
- GE courses staffed with full-time faculty

### C-1 Foundational Skills (3 courses)

#### **First-Year Seminar in Critical Thinking (FYS):**

Development of critical thinking and support for transition to college are the cornerstones of the First Year Seminar. This course introduces students to college-level curriculum and habits through a disciplinary or interdisciplinary topic. While the topics will vary depending on the section, all courses will fulfill four broad goals:

1. Practice in college-level writing: To succeed in the course students must demonstrate foundational writing skills (see Written Communication below).
2. Development of analytical and critical thinking: Students will improve their critical thinking skills by reading analytically from various texts, synthesizing information from those sources, and evaluating the strength of that content.
3. Exploration of a topic: Students will study a disciplinary or interdisciplinary subject in depth and be assessed according to the learning goals appropriate to that content.
4. Facilitation of transition to college: By participating in small-group activities and experiences with the entire first-year class, students will become part of a community of learners and be assisted in their transition to college life.

#### **Written communication:**

Students must demonstrate foundational writing proficiency (write Standard English, clearly and appropriately; analyze critically, through organized and persuasive writing; use appropriate citation for both primary and secondary sources). In courses focusing on written communication skills, students will complete written work such as formal and informal essays, blogs, lab reports, or reflective pieces. Assignments should emphasize some of the following skills: articulating and defending a thesis, supporting an argument with examples/evidence, stating results, integrating primary and secondary sources, and using Standard Written English. Instructors will provide feedback on students’ effective use of these skills.

*Advanced writing in the major:* Each major will require at least one advanced writing course that focuses on writing strategies and assignments appropriate to that major. These courses will incorporate careful attention to the writing process (planning, organizing, drafting, revising, and rewriting) and significant opportunities for

writing, including at least one major paper or its equivalent.

**Oral communication (O):**

Students must complete COMM 110 Foundations of Human Communication or demonstrate equivalent proficiency (ability to create appropriate and effective messages in public, interpersonal, and small group settings; ability to listen and respond to mediated messages in an appropriate and effective manner).

In courses focusing on oral communication skills, students will speak to persuade, inform, or debate; they will orally convey material in a clear, cogent, and concise manner; they will create appropriate messages in interpersonal, small group, or public settings and will receive feedback on their oral communication skills.

**Quantitative reasoning (Q):**

Students must complete one of the following five courses: MATH 113 Quantitative Reasoning, MATH 115 Elementary Probability and Statistics, MATH 210 Statistical Analysis, PSYC 241 Statistics and Research Design I, or MATH 121 Calculus I – or demonstrate equivalent proficiency (for MATH 113, 115 or 210: Understand and use basic statistical concepts including interpreting scatterplots and regression lines, understanding randomness, error and variation in samples, survey and experimental design, basic concepts of statistical inference [i.e., estimation and/or hypothesis testing], and limitations of statistical approaches; for MATH 121: Understand and use derivatives and integrals, and apply these concepts to rates of change, optimization, exponential growth or decay, and area beneath the curve).

Students who place into MATH 105 Basic Algebra must complete that course before enrolling in any of the four foundational courses, although they may enroll concurrently in other Q courses.

In courses focusing on quantitative reasoning skills, students will accurately interpret quantitative information from a variety of historical or contemporary sources; or they will organize, analyze, and persuasively convey data through graphs; or they will analyze data using tools such as statistical software or spreadsheets; or they will solve problems via appropriate quantitative methods.

**C-2 Physical Activity and Wellness (4 courses, 0.5 credit each)**

A strong liberal education presumes that students can meet the challenges of a career and responsible citizenship by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. It is essential that students engage in physical activity and learn life-long activities that will contribute to a purposeful, healthy, and rewarding life.

Students will choose classes from a list of physical activity and wellness courses — two from PE 101 Lifetime Activity and two from PE 105 Fitness and Wellness Activity. Student-athletes who compete at the intercollegiate level are not allowed to take an activity course in the same sport in which they compete.

Students will satisfy the following goals:

1. Skill acquisition for lifetime participation and enjoyment.
2. Knowledge and application of etiquette and rules of the activity.
3. Knowledge and applications of scientific principles of fitness and nutrition for personal programs.
4. Discussion of wellness principles related to each activity.

**Note on sections III, IV, and V:**

A strong education presumes that students can express their thoughts clearly in written and oral form; that they know how to organize, develop, and refine thoughts for maximum effectiveness; and that they can think quantitatively at a high level in order to understand the complexities of a technologically sophisticated world. All students are expected to demonstrate or acquire basic levels of these foundational skills (W, O, and Q) during their first year. The W, O, and Q skills will be infused across the general education curriculum so that students have multiple opportunities to reinforce them. Most courses proposed for the categories “Integration Into Our World,” “Ways of Knowing,” and “Synthesis and Critical Thinking” will reinforce one of the skills. The syllabus

will indicate that the skills instruction is an integral part of the course and that skills-oriented assignments will receive sufficient weight to reflect this foundational ability.

### **C-3 Integration Into the World (3 courses, at least one in each of two categories)**

Global citizenship requires an understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of the world and a commitment to addressing its multiple needs. Honoring its roots in the Church of the Brethren, Manchester College approaches such challenges through a commitment to responsible stewardship of resources, peaceful transformation of conflict, civic engagement and service to others, appreciation for other cultures, and respect for the infinite value of every person. Students can best be prepared to become persons of ability and conviction by approaching the challenges of global citizenship by applying the values and attitudes most central to the College's history.

**Note:** Classes will be able to count for only one of the two categories below.

**Responsible Citizenship:** Students will learn to understand the assumptions and motivations of those who hold diverse positions and learn to work effectively with those individuals. They will learn to engage in civil discourse on contentious topics and develop responses — from theoretical to service-oriented — to the legitimate needs of various parties while respecting higher principles of fairness and justice. Students will examine past and present controversies touching on topics that may be interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international.

**Global Connections:** Students will develop a global perspective, sensitivity to cultural diversity, and strategies for cross-cultural interaction through one or more of the following approaches: Students will acquire basic command of a language other than their own. Students will learn how one or more non-US cultures or regions define themselves. Students will acquire intercultural experience by completing one or more course/s off campus that focuses on a non-US culture (i.e., short-term or residential programs).

### **C-4 Ways of Knowing (9 courses)**

A strong liberal education presumes a breadth of knowledge and basic understanding of how different disciplines define themselves, understand reality, and contribute to other fields. Students will choose courses from a list of courses in the following areas:

**Philosophical, Religious and Creative Inquiry:** How humans express their values and beliefs. (4 courses, each in a different discipline)

This category is devoted to the study of human expressions of beliefs, values, and aspirations. Each learning goal will be satisfied by the completion of one course selected from a distinct listing. Students will satisfy the following goals:

1. Religion: Understand ideas central to Christianity, either alone or compared to another religion, develop conceptual tools and analytical skills for understanding how religion responds to fundamental human dilemmas, and acquire a basic understanding of how religious beliefs and practices function within a world view and shape intellectual traditions and societies.
2. Philosophy: Discuss the approaches that philosophers take to fundamental human questions and acquire the vocabulary and skills necessary to engage in philosophical inquiry themselves, especially through developing their ability to understand and evaluate arguments.
3. Visual and Performing Arts: Understand the non-verbal elements and structures of one or more of the visual and performing arts in different historical periods; examine the arts critically; and distinguish styles and genres.
4. Literature: Study literature typical of a particular culture, historical period, or genre; learn terminology and techniques of literary analysis, aesthetic principles pertinent to literature, and ways in which literature articulates the preoccupations and dilemmas of people from various backgrounds.

**Human Behavior and Institutions:** How and why humans do what they do. (3 courses, each in a different discipline)

This category is devoted to the study of how humans behave both individually and collectively. Students will satisfy the following goals:

1. Acquire the vocabulary necessary to describe and analyze human behavior from societal and institutional perspectives.
2. Examine the central ethical dilemmas of contemporary or historical societies. These dilemmas can be personal, political, economic, or educational.
3. Articulate and apply the formal theoretical perspectives and empirical research used in the social sciences.

**The Natural World:** How and why the world works as it does. (2 courses, each in a different discipline)

This category is devoted to the scientific study of natural processes in the world. Students will satisfy the following goals:

1. Demonstrate a systematic understanding of some aspect of the natural world through learning the content, vocabulary, and interrelationships among well-supported scientific theories.
2. Articulate the unique features of scientific methodologies, such as hypothesis testing based on empirical observations, and probabilistic conclusions.

### **C-5 Synthesis and Critical Thinking (1 course + VIA programs)**

Liberal education requires both the acquisition of knowledge from many disciplines and also the ability to connect and synthesize material from multiple perspectives. Through public programs representing diverse topics and perspectives as well as an upper-level interdisciplinary course, students will learn to understand and respond to complexity.

#### **Critical Connections (1 course)**

The critical connections is a capstone course in which students explore a substantive topic or problem from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and modes of inquiry appropriate to the liberal arts. Students will analyze issues of importance and develop increased capacity to confront complexity and ambiguity, and synthesize information and respond to intellectual challenges. Students will meet this requirement by completing one INTD course selected from a distinct list during the junior or senior year.

#### **Values, Ideas and the Arts (1 hour, 40 programs)**

Through VIA programs, students will gain exposure to a range of intellectual and artistic ideas and values. Programs will be chosen for their potential to promote dialogue and broaden students' cultural experiences.

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## **The BA and BS degree**

### **Bachelor of Arts**

Students who seek the BA degree will demonstrate language proficiency, other than their native language, at the Intermediate level. They will be able to interact with native speakers well enough to accomplish uncomplicated communicative tasks in the target culture; acquire information from various media, including broadcast and print, and make basic suppositions; and write to convey information and opinions. Students will demonstrate basic control of structures to express different time frames (present, past, future) and attitudes (conditional, subjunctive), and understand common gestures and forms of politeness.

### **Bachelor of Science**

Students who seek the BS degree will demonstrate mastery of quantitative thinking skills at the level of introductory (conceptual) statistics or applied (non-theoretical) calculus or higher. They will be able to construct and interpret graphs used to present data and mathematical relationships, and identify misuses of data and

common fallacies in numerical reasoning. In a course on statistics students will learn the role of probability in drawing statistical conclusions, understand when causation is a valid conclusion rather than simple correlation, and apply basic statistical techniques. In a calculus course students will understand and apply common growth models (e.g., linear, quadratic, exponential), and analyze and interpret rates of change in applied settings.