West Valley College

General Education Breadth Requirements

General Education (GE) at West Valley College is intended to provide students with a diverse experience, knowledge and understanding in disciplines both within and outside the students’ chosen field of study. We are committed to helping students to: think critically; communicate clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing; apply mathematical and scientific concepts; use technology effectively; achieve physical and mental wellness; experience and appreciate the creative arts; develop information literacy; understand multicultural and diverse perspectives; and gain insight into ethical and social issues. Through all these learning experiences, we encourage students to develop self-understanding and pursue life-long learning.

Each candidate for West Valley College’s Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree shall:

- Complete a minimum of twenty-four (24) semester units of general education coursework as indicated in categories A through G (below) with a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher.
- Complete courses in satisfaction of Area A1, Language and Rationality, with a grade of "C" or better in each course.
- Complete a minimum of eighteen (18) semester units in a major or area of emphasis with a grade of "C" or better in each course.
- Complete a minimum of sixty (60) degree applicable units with a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher.
- A course may be used to satisfy both a general education requirement and a major or area of emphasis requirement.

Criteria and Definitions Used to select course work to be included in the GE for AA/AS

Title 5 speaks to the General Education policy of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges (Title 5 §55805):

Central to an Associate Degree, General Education is designed to introduce students to the variety of means through which people comprehend the modern world. It reflects the conviction of colleges that those who receive their degrees must possess in common certain basic principles, concepts and methodologies both unique to and shared by the various disciplines. College educated persons must be able to use this knowledge when evaluating and appreciating the physical environment, the culture, and the society in which they live. Most importantly, General Education should lead to better self-understanding.

Each course proposed through the Curriculum Committee to fulfill an area of our A.A./A.S. General Education requirement is considered in light of the above philosophy statements and the General Education Area definitions adopted by the Curriculum Committee. Each course brought forward for consideration to meet General Education criteria will be reviewed by the General Education Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee.
Area Definitions and Requirements

1. Language and Rationality

(Title 5, Section 55806 (D) Language and Rationality. Courses in language and rationality are those which develop for the student the principles and applications of language toward logical thought, clear and precise expression and critical evaluation of communication in whatever symbol system the student uses. Such courses include:

(i) English Composition. Courses fulfilling the written composition requirement shall be designed to include both expository and argumentative writing.

(ii) Communication and Analytical Thinking. Courses fulfilling the communication and analytical thinking requirement include oral communication, mathematics, logic, statistics, computer languages and programming, and related disciplines.)

   a. English Composition

Students will demonstrate clear and precise written expression and critical evaluation of communication in the English language. The course must provide the framework for students to explore general rhetorical principles and include the expository and the argumentative forms. Emphasis is placed on writing coherent, compelling essays and demonstrating critical thinking skills and the basic elements of building a convincing argument (Must include minimum writing of 6,000 to 8,000 words). Guiding questions for consideration include:

• Does the course explore rhetorical principles independent of the application of writing to a specific profession?

• Is there assigned and graded student writing both in class as well as assigned homework?

• Does the course carry an appropriate prerequisite distinguishing it from a basic skills class? • Do assignments include expository and argumentative forms?

   b. Communication and Analytical Thinking

The curricula foster the ability to communicate knowledge, information, ideas, and feelings and enhance the ability to evaluate, solve problems, and make decisions. Students will demonstrate the ability to use mathematical concepts and principles in real-world contexts.

Students will demonstrate clear and precise oral expression and critical evaluation of communication in the English language. Guiding questions for consideration include:

• Does the course emphasize the development of students’ communication and reasoning skills?

• Does the course include faculty-supervised, faculty-evaluated practice in communicating orally in the physical presence of other listeners (not online or recorded)?

• Are rhetorical principles covered?
• Does the course promote development of competencies in communication or computation, and apply the appropriate technical, interpretive, and evaluative skills?

• Does the course solve and/or avoid problems by experimenting and generating solutions?

Learning Outcomes for this area include students’ ability to:

• Read complex college-level texts and listen to college-level lectures without guidance, and summarize the information presented;

• Analyze ideas presented in college-level reading materials, and present that analysis intelligently in writing;

• Write clearly, imaginatively, and forcefully, selecting forms, methods, and modes that will best achieve a writing assignment’s purpose;

• Use proper research methods, keep proper research records, and incorporate researched material appropriately into their own ideas and writing;

• Form provable theses based on reading and research, and validate those theses, distinguishing between fact and opinion;

• Recognize and use logical arguments, persuasive strategies, and conventions that are appropriate to the writer’s audience.

• Make effective use of tools in order to obtain, organize and/or critically evaluate information;

• Synthesize, critique, argue and give alternatives to various problems;

• Communicate results orally, in writing, and through the use of various technological methods;

• Interconnect the knowledge of many different disciplines.

II. Natural Sciences

(Title 5, Section 55806 (A)Natural Sciences. Courses in the natural sciences are those which examine the physical universe, its life forms, and its natural phenomena. To satisfy the general education requirement in natural sciences, a course shall be designed to help the student develop an appreciation and understanding of the scientific method, and encourage an understanding of the relationships between science and other human activities. This category would include introductory or integrative courses in astronomy, biology, chemistry, general physical science, geology, meteorology, oceanography, physical geography, physical anthropology, physics and other scientific disciplines.)

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the scientific method and the relationship between science and human activities. General guiding questions include:

• Does the course help students achieve an understanding and appreciation of scientific principles and the scientific method?

• Does the course help students achieve the “science literacy” expected of educated citizens in any profession?

Learning outcomes for this area include students’ ability to:
• Explain concepts and theories related to physical, chemical, and biological natural phenomena;
• Demonstrate an understanding of the scientific process and its use and limitations in the solution of problems;
• Draw a connection between natural sciences and their own lives;
• Make critical judgments about the validity of scientific evidence and the applicability of scientific theories;
• Demonstrate an understanding of the role of culture in the advancement of science and the impact of scientific advancement and natural phenomena on diverse cultures;
• Demonstrate knowledge of the use of technology in scientific investigation and human endeavors, and the advantages and disadvantages of that technology;
• Demonstrate an understanding of change and evolution as central underlying themes in the study of the Natural Sciences;
• Demonstrate an understanding of the structure and function of the human body

III. Humanities

(Title 5, Section 55806 (B) Humanities. Courses in the humanities are those which study the cultural activities and artistic expressions of human beings. To satisfy the general education requirement in the humanities, a course shall be designed to help the student develop an awareness of the ways in which people throughout the ages and in different cultures have responded to themselves and the world around them in artistic and cultural creation and help the student develop aesthetic understanding and an ability to make value judgments. Such courses could include introductory or integrative courses in the arts, foreign languages, literature, philosophy, and religion.)

Students will recognize the ways in which people throughout the ages and in different cultures have responded to themselves and the world around them in artistic and cultural forms. Courses in this area are those which study cultural activities and artistic expressions. Courses must encourage students to analyze and appreciate works of philosophical, historical, literary, aesthetic and cultural importance. Guiding questions:

• Will students learn to analyze and appreciate works of philosophical and cultural importance?
• Does the course use canonical or seminal works as pathways to a broader understanding of the human condition?

Courses in this area typically include: Art, drama, literature, music, history, philosophy, languages other than English.

Learning outcomes for this area include students’ ability to:

• Effectively communicate and express themselves and make themselves understood through visual, auditory, tactile, and symbolic means;
• Demonstrate knowledge of the variety of forms of expression (verbal and no-verbal) and how those are used to communicate social, cultural, and personal ideas, feelings, and concepts;
• Demonstrate knowledge of how history, language, and the visual and performing arts are interconnected, as well as an understanding of the value of each communication;
• Demonstrate knowledge of how and why the visual and performing arts are unique and how inherent meaning in the arts transcend written and verbal communication.

IV. Social Science

(Title 5, Section 55806 (B) Social and Behavioral Sciences. Courses in the social and behavioral sciences are those which focus on people as members of society. To satisfy the general education requirement in social and behavioral sciences, a course shall be designed to develop an awareness of the method of inquiry used by the social and behavioral sciences. It shall be designed to stimulate critical thinking about the ways people act and have acted in response to their societies and should promote appreciation of how societies and social subgroups operate. This category would include introductory or integrative survey courses in cultural anthropology, cultural geography, economics, history, political science, psychology, sociology and related disciplines.)

a. Series 1: Social and Behavioral Science

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the modes of inquiry and theories that are used to think critically about the ways people act and have acted in response to their societies. Students learn from courses in this area that human, social, political and economic institutions and behavior are inextricably interwoven. Coursework completed shall ensure opportunities for students to develop an understanding of the perspectives and methods of social and behavioral sciences. Issues studied in these courses should be examined in their contemporary, historical, and geographical settings. The course should be taught form a theoretical point of view and focus on core concepts and methods of the discipline. This category may include introductory or integrative survey courses in cultural and social anthropology, cultural geography, economics, history, political science, psychology, sociology, and related disciplines. Guiding questions include:

• Does the course explore the principles, methodologies, value systems or ethics employed in social scientific inquiry?
• Does the course help the student develop an awareness of the method of inquiry used by the social and behavioral sciences?
• Does the course stimulate critical thinking about the ways people act and have acted in response to their societies?
• Does the course emphasize the concept of the discipline on various populations of society?

b. Series 2: American History and Institutions
Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of American institutions and ideals, the Constitution, and the representative forms of government that exist at the national, state and local level.

Learning outcomes for this area include students’ ability to:

- Identify and analyze key concepts and theories about human and/or societal development;
- Critique generalizations and popular opinion about human behavior and society, distinguishing opinion and values from scientific observations and study;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the use research and scientific methodologies in the study of human behavior and societal change;
- Better understand themselves, others, and society;
- Understand and think critically about different cultures and their influences on human development or society, including how issues related to race, class and gender interact with culture to impact females and males;
- Examine the biological, psychological, and sociological factors that influence the personalities and behaviors of females and males from a multicultural perspective;
- Understand how history influences cultural development and is influenced by culture.

V. Lifelong Understanding and Development

Students will demonstrate individual competencies and personal responsibility through exploration and analysis of their role in society. This area of study helps equip students for lifelong understanding and development of themselves as physiological, social, and psychological beings. Courses in this area include physical education (including kinesiology and dance), varsity sports, and courses in human behavior, sexuality, nutrition, and mental health. Non-activity courses in this area should include three kinds of inquiry covering a lifespan of more than just a few years (courses should not focus on one aspect of human life such as infancy): Sociological: in this context, the relationships between an individual and broader society. Physiological: the human body as an integrated organism with systemic functions such as movement, nutrition, growth, reproduction, and aging. Psychological: the study of the mental processes that create consciousness, behavior, emotions and intelligence. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of lifelong wellness through physical fitness and personal development. Lifelong wellness includes the ability to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of physical fitness and its role in lifelong wellness.
- Take personal responsibility for identifying psycho-social needs, determining resources, and accessing appropriate services for academic success.
- Learning outcome for this area include students’ ability to:
  - Develop an awareness of how physical, social, emotional, or intellectual factors influences their personal development;
  - Explore a discipline and to function as independent and effective learners;
  - Accurately assess knowledge, skills, and abilities in relationship to their educational and career goals.

VI. Cultural Diversity
Courses in this category demonstrate sensitivity to, and promote, a climate of cultural diversity. They focus specifically on a multicultural and global perspective and foster an understanding of the student’s role in a global community. Courses that fulfill this requirement introduce and examine the intersection of ethnicity, language, or culture with gender, sexuality, class, or other important social categories, such as religion. The emphasis for any course meeting this requirement must be substantial and thematic rather than incidental or supplemental. Courses approved for this category meet at least four of the following goals and criteria: 1) Study the history, experience, and specific contributions of one or more groups that are distinct from the dominant culture in the U.S. or the student’s country of origin. 2) Increase students’ knowledge and understanding of other cultures. 3) Develop an awareness of racism or sexism and its impact on society. 4) Promote critical thinking about issues relevant to one or more groups that are distinct from the dominant culture in the U.S. or the student’s country of origin. 5) Identify theories and practices of accommodation, assimilation, integration, and pluralism. 6) Recognize artistic achievements and aesthetic values of non-Western cultures. 7) Provide opportunities for students to recognize their own attitude toward cultural diversity. 8) Encourage and stimulate personal discovery of the individual’s identity in a culturally diverse world.

Learning outcomes for this area include students’ ability to:

- Connect knowledge of self and society to larger cultural contexts;
- Articulate the differences and similarities between and within cultures
- Identify cultural themes of immigrant and native groups within the United States of America;
- Identify the contributions to American culture of each group studies

VII. Physical Education

Students will learn skills and attitudes that will help them live a longer, healthier and more productive life.

VIII. Information Literacy

- Students will be able to demonstrate skills central to information literacy. Information literacy includes the ability to:
  - Effectively locate and access information in numerous formats using a variety of appropriate search tools.
  - Evaluate the relevance, quality, and credibility of a wide variety of information sources using critical thinking and problem solving skills. Lifelong Wellness Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of lifelong wellness.