Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century
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Cluster One is the cornerstone of General Education: The Human Community at JMU. Through course work in three areas and a required information literacy test, this cluster requires students to demonstrate:

- Critical thinking skills
- Effective oral presentation skills
- Effective writing skills
- Competency in information literacy

Competence in these areas is fundamental to subsequent study in major and professional programs. Therefore, all students are required to complete Cluster One requirements during their first academic year at JMU.

Cluster One Structure
Cluster One consists of nine credits and a competency test. All students must earn credit for one course in each of three areas representing the primary content of the cluster: Critical Thinking, Human Communication and Writing. In addition to the three courses, students are required to demonstrate competency in information literacy by passing the Information Seeking Skills Test (ISSST).

Enrollment in Cluster One courses is restricted to students in their first academic year at JMU. Cluster One areas and courses are not repeatable without permission. To secure permission to take a Cluster One course after the first year, students must submit a “Cluster One Request Form” available on the General Education website under “Forms.” Permission to enroll is given based on course availability and need.

Cluster One Requirements
Cluster One skills in writing, communication and critical thinking are essential to academic success and, for that reason, should be taken during a student’s first year at JMU. While Cluster One courses must be completed in the first year, the courses may be taken in any order.

Critical Thinking
In this area, students study various techniques and approaches to critical thinking such as analyzing and evaluating information, arguments, premises and concepts. Critical thinking fosters inquiry and problem solving abilities. Depending upon the course, the content focuses on the function of language, basic business principles, issues in recent history, mediated communication, informal logical reasoning or problem solving in science and technology. Cluster One offers six classes that meet this requirement.

Choose one of the following:
- BUS 160. Business Decision Making in a Modern Society
- HIST 150. Critical Issues in Recent Global History
- ISAT 160. Problem Solving Approaches in Science and Technology
- MAD 150. Mediated Communication: Issues and Skills
- PHIL 120. Critical Thinking
- PHIL 150. Ethical Reasoning

Students pursuing a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree may not use either PHIL 120 or PHIL 150 to fulfill the B.A. philosophy course requirement. Students who have received credit for one critical thinking class are not eligible to receive credit for a second critical thinking class without permission.

Human Communication
In this area, students are introduced to the study of human communication as a process. Emphasis is on examining the role of self-concept, perception, culture, verbal and nonverbal dimensions in the communication process; using power and managing conflict and applying critical listening. Depending upon the course, the content focuses on an overview of the principles and practices of interpersonal, small group and public communication, or constructing informative and persuasive speeches with an emphasis on individual public speaking contexts, or constructing informative and persuasive group presentations. Cluster One requires completion of one of three courses offered in oral communication.

Choose one of the following:
- COM 121. Fundamental Human Communication: Presentations
- COM 122. Fundamental Human Communication: Individual Presentations
- COM 123. Fundamental Human Communication: Group Presentations

Students who have received credit for one COM class are not eligible to receive credit for a second COM class.

Writing
This area of Cluster One emphasizes the process of constructing focused, logical, coherent and well-supported documents. Students employ research to produce writing stylistically appropriate to its audience, purpose and occasion. Students are introduced to a variety of writing genres. Students are required to edit their writing for clarity and control of conventions.

Complete the following:
- WRTC 103. Critical Reading and Writing
GWRTC Credit and Waiver

Students may receive credit or waiver for GWRTC 103 under the following conditions:

- an AP minimum score of 4 on the English Language and Composition or the English Literature and Composition test.
- a Higher-Level IB English score of 5.
- transfer or dual enrollment credit for GWRTC 103.
- successful completion of the GWRTC 103 Waiver by Examination.

Students who have received credit for GWRT 101 are not eligible to receive credit for WRTC 100. Students who have received credit for GWRT 102 are not eligible to receive credit for WRTC 100 or GWRTC 103. Students may not repeat GWRTC 103 for credit.

Information Literacy

Information literacy is the ability to locate, evaluate and use information effectively to accomplish a purpose. Cluster One requires completion of the Information-Seeking Skills Test (ISST). All entering students must pass the ISST by the deadline announced by the university.

Cluster One Learning Objectives

After completing Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century, students should be able to use reading, writing, oral communication, critical thinking and information literacy skills for inquiring, learning, thinking and communicating in their personal, academic and civic lives.

Critical Thinking

After completing course work in critical thinking, students should be able to:

- Evaluate claims in terms of clarity, credibility, reliability and accuracy.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify, analyze and generate claims, arguments and positions.
- Identify and evaluate theses and conclusions, stated and unstated assumptions, and supporting evidence and arguments.
- Apply these skills to one's own work and the work of others.

Human Communication

After completing course work in communication, students should be able to:

- Understand and apply the fundamentals of audience analysis, message construction, development, organization and presentation.
- Deliver effective oral presentations in a variety of contexts.
- Identify, evaluate and employ critical and sensitive listening behaviors.
- Identify and manage the verbal and nonverbal dimensions of communication in a variety of contexts.
- Recognize and apply the influences of self-concept perception and culture on communication.
- Identify, evaluate and utilize the nature and functions of power and the strategies of conflict negotiation.

Writing

After completing course work in writing, students should be able to:

- Analyze and evaluate texts to identify their argumentative, credible and ethical elements; students should also be able to reflect on civic responsibility as it relates to written discourse.
- Develop and support a relevant, informed thesis or point of view that is appropriate for its audience, purpose and occasion.
- Demonstrate an understanding of writing as a series of steps involving invention, research, critical analysis and evaluation, and revision for audience, purpose and occasion.
- Effectively incorporate and document appropriate sources to support an argumentative thesis or point of view; exhibit control over surface conventions such as syntax, grammar, punctuation and spelling that are appropriate for the writer's audience, purpose and occasion.

Information Literacy

After completing the ISST, JMU's information literacy test, and course work in critical thinking, human communication and writing, students should be able to:

- Recognize that information is available in a variety of forms including, but not limited to, text, images and visual media.
- Determine when information is needed and find it efficiently using a variety of reference sources.
- Evaluate the quality of the information.
- Use information effectively for a purpose.
- Employ appropriate technologies to create an information-based product.
- Use information ethically and legally.