Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century
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Cluster One is the cornerstone of General Education: The Human Community at JMU and to subsequent study in the major and professional programs. This cluster emphasizes competencies in the areas of oral and written communication, critical thinking, and information literacy. The broadly stated goals for Cluster One are:

- Demonstrate competency in information literacy.
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills.
- Demonstrate effective oral presentation skills.
- Demonstrate effective writing skills.
- Demonstrate self-analysis and self-directed learning.

Competence in these goals is fundamental to general education and to subsequent study in major and professional programs. Therefore, all students are required to complete all Cluster One requirements during their first academic year at JMU. The specific learning goals for each area of Cluster One are included in this section.

Cluster One Structure
Cluster One consists of nine credits. All students MUST complete one course in each of three groupings of courses representing the main content disciplines of the cluster: Critical Thinking, Human Communication and Writing. Courses may be taken in any order. In addition to the three courses, students are required to demonstrate competency in information literacy by completing two high stakes exams: the technology test (Tech Level I) and the Information Seeking Skills Test (ISST).

Cluster One Requirements
All students must complete Cluster One requirements during their first academic year at JMU. If this requirement cannot be met due to extenuating circumstances a deferral form must be submitted to the Office of University Studies by March 2, 2012.

Information Literacy
Cluster One requires completion of the two information literacy tests during the first year. Information literacy is the ability to locate, evaluate and use information effectively to accomplish a purpose. Cluster One students must demonstrate competency by successfully completing:

- Information-Seeking Skills Test (ISST)
- Tech Level I exam (word processing, presentation software, spreadsheets)

Critical Thinking
Cluster One requires the completion of one of five courses offered in critical thinking. Students study various techniques and approaches to critical thinking such as analyzing and evaluating information, arguments, premises, and concepts and their relationships as well as fostering 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.

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.

Human Communication
Cluster One requires completion of one of three courses offered in oral communication. 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.

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. Students who have received credit for COM 121 are not eligible to receive credit for COM 122 or COM 123. Students who have received credit for COM 122 are not eligible to receive credit for COM 121 or COM 123. Students who have received credit for COM 123 are not eligible to receive credit for COM 121 or COM 122.
Writing
Cluster One requires completion of the writing course GWRTC 103. The emphasis is on the process of constructing a focused, logical, coherent, well-supported thesis or point of view. Students employ research and formal documentation to produce writing stylistically appropriate to its audience, purpose and occasion. Students edit their writing for clarity and control of conventions, and they are prepared to use reading and writing in their personal, academic and civic lives.

Complete the following:
GWRTC 103. Critical Reading and Writing

GWRTC Placement and Exemptions
Students may receive credit or exemptions 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.
- Receive an exemption for successfully completing the Waiver Exam for GWRTC 103 (http://www.jmu.edu/gened/mandu_info.shtml).
- 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.

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

Information Literacy
After completing both information literacy tests and course work in critical thinking, human communication, and writing, students should be able to:
- Determine when information is needed and find it efficiently using a variety of reference sources.
- Evaluate the quality of the information.
- Use the information effectively for an appropriate purpose.
- Employ appropriate technologies to create an information-based product.
- Use information ethically and legally.

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 and understand 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.