

General Education



General Education Mission

In the liberal arts tradition, General Education: The Human Community aspires to create informed global citizens of the 21st century. We challenge our community of students and faculty to engage in personal and collective reflection, development and action.

Program Philosophy

The Human Community is the core academic program of James Madison University. It is required of all students regardless of their major or professional program. The Human Community seeks to educate students in ways that have been fundamental to higher education for centuries. The program also cultivates the habits of mind and heart that are essential to informed citizens in a global community. The program is committed to helping students develop their ability to reason and make ethical choices; to appreciate beauty and understand the natural and social worlds they live in; to recognize the importance of the past and work toward a better future.

Program Structure

General Education includes 41 to 44 credit hours of course work divided into five clusters, each organized around a set of learning objectives designed to provide fundamental knowledge and skills across the breadth of traditional disciplines. In each of these five clusters, students choose and complete a cross-disciplinary set of courses, some of which may be taken in other countries through the JMU Study Abroad Program.

Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century

Cluster One, the cornerstone of the General Education Program, emphasizes those competencies critical to student success in all course work at JMU. Students take three courses focusing on communication, critical thinking and writing. Students must also demonstrate information literacy through a non-credit competency test. Students typically complete Cluster One in their first year at the university.

Cluster Two: Arts and Humanities

The courses in Cluster Two rest on the belief that educated and enlightened citizens need a solid foundation in the arts and humanities. Students take three courses in these areas that engage

them in enduring questions concerning human life, culture and history and that deepen their appreciation of the aesthetic and formal qualities of literary, visual and performing arts produced by local and global cultures.

Cluster Three: The Natural World

Scientific information and mathematical approaches are essential components of solving the world's most pressing issues, as well as being critical to making informed decisions in our own lives. Students take one mathematics course and two science courses. A required laboratory experience can be met through one of the science courses or through an additional, stand-alone course.

Cluster Four: Social and Cultural Processes

Cluster Four courses encourage students to explore the key social and cultural processes and structures that shape the human experience. Students take two courses in this cluster: one that examines social and cultural processes in a global context and one that examines these processes within the context of the United States.

Cluster Five: Individuals in the Human Community

In Cluster Five, students learn about themselves as individuals and as members of different communities. Students take one course in each of the wellness and socio-cultural domains, which explore how individuals develop and function in the social, psychological, emotional, intellectual, occupational, environmental, physical and spiritual dimensions.

**For more information, contact:
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