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# Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century

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Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century

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 courses may be taken in any order. Cluster One areas and courses are not repeatable without permission. Permission to enroll in additional Cluster One courses is given based on course availability. There are no overrides available in Cluster One courses.

## Cluster One Learning Objectives

After completing Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century, students should be able to use reading, writing, human 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:

- Explain the fundamental processes that significantly influence communication.
- Construct messages consistent with the diversity of communication purpose, audience, context and ethics.
- Respond to messages consistent with the diversity of communication purpose, audience, context and ethics.
- Utilize information literacy skills expected of ethical communicators.

## Writing

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

- Demonstrate an awareness of rhetorical knowledge, which may include the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating and comprehending texts.
- Employ critical thinking, which includes the ability through reading, research and writing, to analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis.
- Employ writing processes.
- Demonstrate an awareness of conventions, the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate in a variety of texts.
- Compose in multiple environments using traditional and digital communication tools.

## Information Literacy

After completing the [Madison Research Essential Skills Test \(MREST\)](#), 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.

# Cluster One Structure

Completion of all courses and tests in Cluster One is required of students in their first academic year at JMU.

Cluster One consists of nine credits and a competency test. All students must earn credit for one course in critical thinking, human communication and writing. In addition to the three courses, students are required to demonstrate information literacy competency by passing the [Madison Research Essential Skills Test \(MREST\)](#).

## 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

[SMAD 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; applying critical listening skills; and developing skills in oral presentations. 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 human communication.

### **Choose one of the following:**

[SCOM 121](#). Fundamental Human Communication: Presentations

[SCOM 122](#). Fundamental Human Communication: Individual Presentations

[SCOM 123](#). Fundamental Human Communication:

Group Presentations

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

## Writing

In this area, students study the role of the writer, the purpose of documents, and the contexts and audience expectations within which documents are produced. Writing is taught as a process involving invention, collaboration, research and revision. Students read, analyze and create texts in multiple genres using traditional and digital communication tools. Content areas may include public and professional discourse, culture, humanities, and technology.

**Complete the following:**

[WRTC 103](#). Critical Reading and Writing

Students may not repeat [WRTC 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 [Madison Research Essentials Test \(MREST\)](#). All entering students must pass the MREST by the deadline announced by the university. Students not completing the requirement by the deadline will have a hold placed on their academic record until the MREST is passed.