

## University Studies – Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Why am I required to take University Studies courses?

University Studies is the general education core curriculum of North Carolina A&T State University. General education is required of all higher education accrediting bodies. Nationally, general education averages between 30 – 50 credit hours.

### 2. How many general education (GE) credits are required at NCATSU?

Michigan State requires 21 GE credits, while Penn State and UNC Charlotte require more than 45. Locally, Elon University requires 58 - 62, UNCG 39, and UNC Chapel Hill 42. At NCATSU, you are required to take 37 GE credits: 13 foundation credits (UNST 1xx), 12 theme cluster credits (various departments), 9 major-specified credits (various departments), and 1-3 senior capstone credits (your major). General education is designed to provide students with the broad based intellectual skills required for full citizenship and a productive life. <http://www.ncat.edu/~univstud/Courses1.html>

### General Education Credits – Selected Universities

Name	State	Hours
Clark Atlanta University	GA	49
Florida International University	FL	36
Howard University	DC	36
Jackson State University	MS	49-59
North Carolina A & T State University	NC	37
Rutgers University-Newark	NJ	48
University of Houston-University Park	TX	48
University of Texas at El Paso, The	TX	42

### 3. On what model was the University Studies curriculum based?

University Studies grew out of a broad movement for general education reform, which began in the latter portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Specifically, UNST's learning goals are derived from Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP). The LEAP initiative was initiated by the American Association for Colleges and Universities.

<http://www.aacu.org/LEAP/index.cfm>

### 4. When was the University Studies curriculum implemented?

University Studies was implemented for the first time in the fall 2006. The planning for University Studies began in 2002 as part of Chancellor James T. Renick's Futures Initiative. <http://www.ncat.edu/~univstud/history.html>

**5. What is the difference between core curriculum and distribution requirement models?**

Distribution requirement models require students to take courses from a set of disciplines to fulfill content area breadth (generally, humanities & arts, social & behavioral sciences, and natural sciences). Core curricula are organized around specific learning objectives and may be organized around discipline-specific or interdisciplinary courses. University Studies is a hybrid of the distribution requirement and core-curriculum model. Departments specify 9 credit hours of distribution requirements in their major-specified credits, students are allowed to choose 12 hours in theme-clusters, and UNST provides 13 hours of core curriculum in the freshman year.

**6. How are UNST courses different from major discipline courses?**

University Studies attempts to build in students four major areas of competency: broad-based critical thinking, effective written and oral communication of ideas, appreciation for diverse cultures, and commitment to ongoing civic engagement and responsibility. All of its courses are interdisciplinary, and thus are organized around the learning goals and not discipline content matter. These courses are meant to be complimentary to major training and are vertically integrated across the student's four-year experience. <http://www.ncat.edu/~univstud/UNSTStructure.pdf>

**7. What if I am a transfer student?**

The articulation agreement between the North Carolina Community Colleges and the UNC system waives general education requirements for all students who completed the general education core requirement at a NC community college. Note that if you enter the UNC system with an Associate's degree, you must have completed the GE requirement.

*The general education core component, if completed successfully by a student with a grade of "C" or better in each course, shall be portable and transferable as a block across the North Carolina Community College System and from that system to UNC institutions, whether or not the transferring student has earned the associate degree. Under special circumstances, a university may choose to accept additional credit hours. (Comprehensive Articulation Agreement Between The University of North Carolina and The North Carolina Community College System, December 2008, page 6.)*

Note that this articulation agreement allows the university to accept additional hours taken in community college. The decision to accept additional hours would be made by an individual student's major department.

If you did not complete your associate degree, then courses will be accepted as equivalents to University Studies foundation and theme cluster courses. This decision is made by the Dean of University Studies in conjunction with the chair of the major

department. This process is identical for students who transfer from another 4-year college or university. The list of UNST equivalent courses can be found at <http://www.ncat.edu/~univstud/resources.html>.

#### **8. Can I transfer UNST Courses?**

The decision to accept UNST courses would be made by the receiving institution. All of the UNST foundation courses fit into the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges general education categories (UNST 110, humanities and fine arts; UNST 120 social/behavioral sciences; UNST 130 natural sciences/mathematics; UNST 140 humanities and fine arts). The theme cluster courses are general education electives. Thus, any student who wishes to transfer University Studies courses should be able to do so. If a student should run into any difficulty, they can contact the Dean of University Studies to intervene on their behalf at the receiving institution.

#### **Criteria Defined by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)**

In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses.

#### **9. Why were no mathematics and basic science classes included in UNST?**

The faculty curriculum committee dealt with this issue by giving major departments 9 major-specified credits in the general education requirements. Mathematics and science were not included in UNST because the level of math proficiency that students arrive with at NCATSU is extremely variable. Each department was given maximum flexibility to address math/science courses in the major-specified credits. This allows them to decide what level and what sorts of courses would be best for a given major.

#### **10. What are the theme clusters and how are they decided upon?**

The theme clusters consist of a group of courses organized around a common theme and learning objectives. They should be courses that are 200 – 300 level. At present none of these courses can have prerequisites other than completion of the UNST foundation courses (UNST 1xx).

The first four clusters were designed by committees of the faculty members derived from all of the schools and colleges. New clusters are proposed by groups of faculty members from any school or college. In fall 2009, the Philosophy, Religion and Society cluster will be available as a 5<sup>th</sup> cluster; Education and Society is under review by the Faculty Senate this semester and should be available by spring 2010.

#### **11. Why are there some 100 and 400 level courses in the theme clusters?**

These courses were added simply to provide additional opportunities for students to take classes that fulfill the general education requirements. It is the intent of the Faculty Roundtable (the curriculum oversight body for UNST) to eventually remove all 100 & 400 level courses (except in exceptional cases) from the clusters. The finished clusters would be populated mainly be 200 – 300 level classes.

#### **12. How many service learning hours are required for graduation?**

Students are required to finish 50 hours of service learning between their freshman year and the beginning of their senior year. Service learning projects and hours are monitored through Mr. Lee Morgan's office in Student Affairs. Transfer students are required to fulfill service learning hours based upon the rank they enter the university. A transfer student who enters as a sophomore must complete 34 hours, and a junior transfer student must complete 17 hours.

The Civic and Service Learning program (CASE) is described at:

<http://www.ncat.edu/~case>

<http://www.ncat.edu/~univstud/ServiceLearning1.html>

#### **13. Where can I find out about the rights and responsibilities of students in general education?**

These do not differ from the general rights and responsibilities of students on this campus. The grade appeal policy is found at:

<http://www.ncat.edu/~univstud/ForStudents1.html>

#### **14. Why did you develop Analytical Reasoning?**

Analytical Reasoning is designed to help students recognize the relationship between formal logic, mathematical and statistical reasoning, and the scientific method. It may be team-taught by a professor of philosophy (who teaches the logic portion) and a

professor of math, science, or engineering. Numerous international studies have shown that the gap between American and international students in STEM disciplines, as well as general scientific literacy is widening (particularly ethnic/minority students). The following quote addresses the centrality of this sort of course to general education:

*First, the general education requirements should help students to develop crucial habits of mind: inquiry, logical thinking, evaluation of evidence. Those are not necessarily taught in any one course, although a logic course is a good start.*

(George C. Leef. General Education Requirements at North Carolina's Public Universities: What do students get in the core curriculum? Inquiry XX., September 2003.)

In this quote, Professor Leef recognizes that it would be best if inquiry, logical thinking, and evaluation of evidence could be found in the same course. In 2003, he did not find such courses within the UNC system. In 2006, we developed Analytical Reasoning with these ideas in mind. The Air Force Academy borrowed the AR syllabus in 2006 and it has been examined there as an example of forward curriculum development.