

General Education

To acquire the breadth in educational experience that characterizes liberal education, develop intellectual discipline, discover their interests and build a foundation for specialization, students must successfully complete courses fulfilling a prescribed set of general education requirements. General education courses include: core requirements in empirical studies; human cultures; mathematical and formal reasoning; foreign language; ultimate questions; body and mind; and global awareness offerings focusing on humans and their natural environment and world cultures. See the Academic Regulations section of this catalog for more information.

The general education curriculum is dedicated to providing students the opportunity to acquire the skills, the experiences and the knowledge needed to achieve broad philosophical, historical, aesthetic and scientific bases for understanding and judging human experience, in the hope that they will enjoy lives characterized by broad vision, self-knowledge, independent action, tolerance and concern for others.

As means to that end, the university requires all students to complete a set of courses designed to:

- Invigorate and stimulate intellectual curiosity
- Broadly prepare students in a diverse set of disciplines, including the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and the fine arts
- Encourage intellectual inquiry in sufficient depth to allow one to contribute to a greater body of knowledge
- Develop expressive capabilities in writing, speaking, and the arts
- Cultivate world citizenship—an understanding of those not like oneself
- Integrate knowledge into a meaningful synthesis

The general education requirements include: (43 credit hours)

One first-year seminar (English 11) or transferable equivalent

Each seminar may also fulfill a core and/or a global awareness requirement. Only one seminar may be applied toward a student's major, but neither seminar may be required for the major or be a prerequisite for another course.

First year seminars (FYS) will use the passions of the Furman faculty for ideas and discovery to ignite the interests and passions of students. Small, discussion-centered seminars encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. First Year Seminars will engage the material with the intention of fostering careful thought, intense discussion, and precise, vivid writing, while those designated as writing seminars (FYW) will explicitly devote significant pedagogical attention to the improvement of the student's writing and the development of information fluency.

Courses meeting core requirements, which must include:

Each course can fulfill only one core requirement. No more than three courses from a single department may be used to satisfy the core requirements.

Two courses in the empirical study of the natural world, at least one with a separate laboratory component (NW)

Through these courses, students should understand how to study causality in the physical universe by constructing falsifiable hypotheses that are testable with evidence from the physical universe. Students should also be exposed to the major scientific theories within a discipline, and understand how these explanatory models were constructed and are currently applied. Students should also appreciate the tentative, progressive, and cumulative nature of scientific knowledge.

Two courses in the empirical study of human behavior and social relations (HB)

These courses will have as an underlying focus the empirical methodologies employed to describe, understand, and predict the behavior of individuals and groups. The aim will be to foster an appreciation among students for the value and meaning of empirically derived knowledge in our world.

A course using historical analysis to study past human interactions (HA)

Courses focus primarily on the historical development of human populations, institutions, and activities, as well as the methods and challenges involved in historical analysis. These courses will provide systematic descriptive coverage of particular places, groups, ideas, institutions, or societies as they moved through time.

A course in the critical, analytical interpretation of texts (TA)

A reflective, critical approach to reading deepens aesthetic appreciation of the resources of language and sharpens the ability to assess and evaluate the documents and messages that inform us and influence our choices. Included in this category are courses in literary studies and other disciplines that study the structures and methods by which texts create and convey meaning.

A course in the visual and performing arts (VP)

Visual and performing arts courses will help students develop an appreciation for how music, theatre, film, digital and/or multimedia artworks, and the visual arts can enrich us as human beings, express the vision of individuals, speak to the human condition, and foster an understanding of other cultures, societies, and times. These courses will also introduce the notion of the arts as a language with its own vocabulary, grammar and expressive capabilities.

A course in mathematical and formal reasoning (MR)

The courses that constitute this category all require the student to master rigorous techniques of formal reasoning and to apply the techniques of both formal reasoning and creative intuition in problem solving situations. Each course in this category will apply those techniques in the mathematical interpretation of ideas and phenomena, the creation and analysis of algorithms, and/or the symbolic representation of quantification, validity, proof, completeness, and consistency.

A course in foreign language (FL)

The sustained, in-depth study of foreign languages is essential to appreciate other parts of the world and other moments of the past, as well as to develop a fuller understanding of one's own world and one's own language. To assure a meaningful acquaintance with a foreign language, all students will complete at least one course demonstrating proficiency in a foreign language.

A course considering ultimate questions (UQ)

Courses considering ultimate questions invite students to engage metaphysical, religious and ethical questions in a direct and explicit way by examining ways in which individuals and societies have articulated what constitutes a good and meaningful life—as that is reflected in various past or present cultural or individual understandings of our obligation to others; our relation to the transcendent; and how these find expression in a rich variety of written, oral, and performative texts.

A course emphasizing the importance of the body and mind (MB)

Courses emphasizing the importance of the body and mind will support Furman's mission statement expressing a commitment to "develop the whole person—intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually." Students will gain a greater understanding and experience corporeality (i.e., bodily existence) in relation to intellectual, social, emotional, and ethical contexts keeping within the spirit of developing the whole person.

Two courses meeting global awareness requirements, including:

These requirements may be met in first year seminar, core, or major courses. A single course may not be used to fulfill both global awareness requirements.

A course addressing humans and the natural environment (NE)

Humans are affecting the dynamics of the planet; they are changing the composition of the atmosphere, the currents in the oceans, and the productivity of natural ecosystems. Because modern societies require more energy, food, and materials than ever before, we are increasingly dependent on stable, productive, and sustainable natural systems. Ironically, our societies are becoming increasingly urban and increasingly insulated from nature just as these ineluctable dependencies are becoming increasingly important. In order to foster an appreciation for these dependencies, courses will emphasize some aspect of the interactive relationships between humans and the natural environment.

A course focusing on world cultures (WC)

World cultures courses will help students achieve a heightened awareness of the diverse cultures and traditions that have formed our world, and to reflect on the relationships between their own and other cultures. Courses will focus on the traditions, beliefs, experiences, and expressions of peoples of, or originating from, Asia, Africa, Latin America, or the pre-colonial Americas.