

General Education

Undergraduate Learning Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

The following student-learning goals and student-learning outcomes reflect the mission of the University to “help students develop academic competencies, professional skills, critical and creative abilities, and ethical values of learned persons who live in a democratic society, an interdependent world, and a technological age.” Through its rich and diverse offering of degree programs and its General Education program, California State University Northridge (CSUN) ensures that all graduates attain these goals and maintain academic integrity. Consistent with its role as a learning-centered university, the campus also recognizes that these learning goals are promoted and enhanced in many formal and informal campus activities and environments outside the classroom.

One of the important purposes of the General Education program is to ensure that every CSUN undergraduate engages in each of these fundamental learning goals. Although many courses integrate more than one goal and set of student-learning outcomes into their curricula, placement of a course into a specific section of the General Education program signifies that the course will emphasize the learning goals and student learning outcomes of that section. All General Education courses should meet the student-learning goals of the GE section they are in. General Education courses in Basic Subjects and those designated as satisfying the Information Competency(IC) and Writing Intensive (WI) goals should meet all of the student learning outcomes of the section/designation. General Education courses in Subject Explorations should meet at least two of the student learning outcomes of their GE section. Courses in the US History and Local Government (Title V) section must meet the Title V requirements as prescribed by California law.

All CSUN students are responsible for pursuing the following twelve learning goals in the General Education program at CSUN. These goals are grouped into four categories: basic skills, subject explorations, United States History and Local Government (Title V), and special designations. Each graduate from CSUN is expected to master the student learning outcomes that are identified for each goal.

Basic Skills (12 units)

The first four goals involve basic skills that provide students with the knowledge and abilities they will find useful and necessary in other G. E. and University courses and in their pursuits after graduation. The fundamental areas of basic skills are:

- Analytical Reading and Expository Writing
- Critical Thinking
- Mathematics, and
- Oral Communication

Students will learn how to read to understand complex topics and write about them, how to distinguish correct from faulty reasoning, how to study and appreciate mathematical ideas and quantitative reasoning, and how to make public presentations of their own thoughts and research.

Subject Explorations (29 units)

The General Education Subject Exploration categories are meant to promote a broad-based interdisciplinary education. The next five goals provide students with a broad background in disciplines at the University in order that they appreciate the breadth of human knowledge and the responsibilities of concerned citizens of the world. Students acquire the knowledge and skills to become lifelong learners and gain an appreciation of different perspectives and insights from which to view human endeavors.

United States History and Local Government (Title V) (6 units)

Courses in United States history and local and state government provide students with the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be an informed, contributing citizen living in California. The requirement includes American history, the American Constitution, and state and local government.

Special Designations

Courses with the special designation of IC (Information Competence) provide students with basic skills in using information retrieval tools and practices that enhance their ability to evaluate and synthesize information competently and ethically. Courses with the special designation of WI (Writing Intensive) provide students with continued practice in expressing themselves through writing in various forms within different disciplinary contexts. Students must take at two courses that have an IC designation: one in the Basic Skills section and one in any Subject Exploration area. Students must select nine units that have a WI designation from upper-division General Education courses within Subject Explorations or U.S. History and Local Government.

Basic Skills

1. Analytical Reading and Expository Writing

Goal: Students will analyze and reflect on complex topics and appropriately synthesize their own and others' ideas in clearly written and well organized edited American English.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Analyze and compare perspective, meaning, and style in different texts, including those that reflect multicultural images and voices;
2. Construct a theme or thesis and organize and develop a substantial, balanced and convincing defense of it in a voice, tone, language, and format (e.g., essay autobiography, report, editorial, case study, inquiry, and research) appropriate to the purpose of the writing;
3. Use logical support, including informed opinion and fact, as well as their interpretations, to develop ideas, avoiding fallacies, biased language, and inappropriate tone;
4. Demonstrate satisfactory competence in the conventions of Edited American English and the elements of presentation (including layout, format, and printing);

5. Select and incorporate ideas derived from a variety of sources, such as library electronic and print resources, books, journals, the Internet, and interviews, and document them responsibly and correctly;
6. Apply a variety of strategies for planning, outlining, drafting, revising and editing written work.

2. Critical Thinking

Goal: Students will analyze information and ideas carefully and logically from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Explain and apply the basic concepts essential to a critical examination and evaluation of argumentative discourse;
2. Use investigative and analytical thinking skills to examine alternatives, explore complex questions and solve challenging problems;
3. Synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions;
4. Evaluate the logic and validity of arguments, and the relevance of data and information.
5. Recognize and avoid common logical and rhetorical fallacies.

3. Mathematics

Goal: Students will gain competence in mathematical reasoning necessary for informed judgment and decision making.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Represent, understand and explain mathematical information symbolically, graphically, numerically and verbally;
2. Develop mathematical models of real-world situations and explain the assumptions and limitations of those models;
3. Use models to make predictions, draw conclusions, check whether the results are reasonable, and find optimal results using technology when necessary and appropriate;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of mathematical reasoning including the ability to prove simple results and/or make statistical inferences.

4. Oral Communication

Goal: Students will understand the basic concepts and practices associated with public speaking and will make public presentations of their own thoughts and research.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Apply critical thinking skills when listening, reading, thinking, and speaking;
2. Create, organize, and support ideas for various types of oral presentations.
3. Evaluate contexts, attitudes, values, and responses of different audiences;
4. Identify, evaluate, and apply different styles of presentation utilizing effective delivery techniques in public speaking ;
5. Demonstrate acceptable ethical standards in research and presentation of materials, including proper verbal citations.

Subject Explorations

5. Natural Sciences

Goal: Students will develop basic knowledge and learn key principles in the natural sciences, including an understanding of the methods of scientific inquiry through laboratory, activity and/or field-based study.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of basic knowledge, principles, and laws in the natural sciences;
2. Explain how the scientific method is used to obtain new data and advance knowledge;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the logical foundations and boundaries of science;
4. Recognize the contribution and potential of science in human society and everyday life;
5. Demonstrate competence in applying the methods of scientific inquiry ;
6. Demonstrate an ability to apply scientific knowledge and to critically assess real world issues and make sound decision.

6. Arts and Humanities

Goal: Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures;
2. Analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;
3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;
4. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;
5. Use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged;
6. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.

7. Social Sciences

Goal: Students will understand the complexities of social relations and human experiences and the ways in which they have changed over time, as well as the nature, scope, and the systematic study of human behaviors and societies.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Explain how social scientists conduct the systematic study of social relations, human experiences and patterns of change over time;
2. Analyze and explain the multiple perspectives found in the social sciences that underlie debates on important historical and contemporary issues;
3. Apply appropriate social scientific methods to collect data, analyze, evaluate, explain, and/or solve problems in social relations and human behavior;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of how social problems impact individuals, communities and societies.

8. Lifelong Learning

Goal: Students will develop cognitive, physical and affective skills which will allow them to become more integrated and well-rounded individuals within various physical, social, cultural, and technological environments and communities.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

1. Identify and actively engage in behaviors conducive to individual health, well-being, or development, and understand the value of maintaining these behaviors throughout their lifespan;
2. Identify and apply strategies leading to health, well-being, or development for community members of diverse populations;
3. Apply the knowledge and skills of science and technology and evaluate how they impact individuals, the community, and/or society.

9. Comparative Cultural Studies/ Gender, Race, Class, Ethnicity Studies and Foreign Languages

Goal: Students will understand the diversity and multiplicity of cultural forces that shape the world through the study of cultures, gender, sexuality, race, religion, class, ethnicities and languages with special focus on the contributions, differences, and global perspectives of diverse cultures and societies.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Describe and compare different cultures;
2. Explain how various cultures contribute to the development of our multicultural world;
3. Describe and explain how race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, sexuality and other markers of social identity impact life experiences and social relations;
4. Analyze and explain the deleterious impact and the privileges sustained by racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, classism, homophobia, religious intolerance or stereotyping on all sectors of society;
5. Demonstrate linguistic and cultural proficiency in a language other than English.

United States History and Local Government (Title V)

10. United States History and Local Government (Title V)

Goal: Students will understand and reflect upon United States history, institutions, and ideals; the Constitution of the United States; and the principles of state and local government as established in California.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Describe and analyze the histories of the United States and California over significant time periods;
2. Explain the principles and major provisions of the Constitutions of the United States and California;
3. Compare United States and California political institutions and practices;
4. Describe and examine the histories and development of political institutions as related to diverse peoples in the United States and California.

Designations

11. Information Competence (GE Designation IC)

Goal: Students will progressively develop information competence skills throughout their undergraduate career by developing a basic understanding of information retrieval tools and practices as well as improving their ability to evaluate and synthesize information ethically.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Determine the nature and extent of information needed;
2. Demonstrate effective search strategies for finding information using a variety of sources and methods;
3. Locate, retrieve, and evaluate a variety of relevant information including print and electronic formats.
4. Organize and synthesize information in order to communicate effectively;
5. Explain the legal and ethical dimensions of the use of information.

12. Writing Intensive (GE Designation WI)

Goal: Students will develop their abilities to express themselves and the knowledge they have obtained through practicing various forms of writing within different disciplinary contexts. Writing intensive courses will build upon the skills gained in the Analytical Reading and Expository Writing section of Basic Skills. In each WI course students will be required to complete writing assignments totaling a minimum of 2500 words.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Develop and clearly define their ideas through writing;
2. Ethically integrate sources of various kinds into their writing;
3. Compose texts through drafting, revising, and completing a finished product;
4. Express themselves through their writing by posing questions, making original claims, and coherently structuring complex ideas;
5. Revise their writing for greater cogency and clarity;
6. Utilize adopted communication modes and documentation styles of specific disciplines (MLA, APA, Chicago, CBE, etc) where appropriate.