

GENERAL EDUCATION AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING IN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

The university's approach to general education reflects a commitment to the transformative power of learning. Grounded in the university's core values of integrity, citizenship, continuous learning, and excellence, the General Education program and the university's degree programs seek to develop and graduate responsible citizens who discover and reflect, communicate effectively, and think critically.

Students in their first year at Aurora University develop foundational academic skills in quantitative reasoning, argument-based writing, discussion, and critical reading. Specifically, students satisfy the quantitative and formal reasoning competency requirement through coursework or examination. They take the university's core composition course, ENG-1000 Introduction to Academic Writing. They also take IDS-1200 Discover What Matters and IDS-1150 First Year Experience. While the IDS-1200 Discover What Matters course focuses on the development of the key academic skills of effective communication and critical thinking, the IDS-1150 First Year Experience course encourages students to reflect upon their interests, skills, and values, and consider how these might inform career and life aspirations. It is also designed to help students make a successful transition to college. For this reason, the course is not a requirement for transfer students. Adult Degree Completion and undergraduate online program students engage in IDS-3040 Global Justice, rather than the first year IDS courses, given the extensive life experience that they bring to their studies. The IDS courses set a tone of inquiry, careful reading, critical thinking, and the communication and application of ideas.

During their junior year, students participate in an assessment, advising, and mentoring process. Students demonstrate their learning to this point in the curriculum through campus-wide assessment. They receive guidance in relation to their final two years of study, including ways they can broaden their experiences or strengthen their skill sets. Attention is given to the steps students need to take to pursue their interests beyond college, whether in their lives, careers, or graduate study. Students also receive one-on-one mentoring with major faculty where these conversations may best take place.

The university is committed to assessing within its General Education program six categories of learning outcomes. These include:

- Artistic Literacy
- Discovery and Reflection
- Quantitative and Formal Reasoning
- Cultural Literacy
- Human Inquiry
- Scientific Inquiry

In addition, the university is committed to assessing the following two University Learning Outcomes in both the General Education program and the major programs:

- Effective Communication
- Critical Thinking

The university is committed to measuring the achievement of the program's outcomes and using assessment as a rationale for program revisions.

These six categories are a distillation and reflection of careful discussion among faculty and staff as to what skills and characteristics ought to represent an Aurora University graduate. What has emerged is a picture of a graduate who demonstrates intellectual and ethical integrity; who is well informed and seeks quality evidence; who reflects critically on values, actions, and consequences; who engages with those holding values and perspectives different from his or her own and seeks out alternative perspectives; who participates responsibly in the community and world; and who contributes to a culture of compassion and respect for dignity. Students who demonstrate effective communication and critical thinking can be characterized as those who read and listen critically; who discuss ideas with respect and openness; who pose and pursue meaningful questions in a range of areas; who analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and arguments; who make connections among academic and nonacademic experiences; who use technology responsibly; who collaborate and exhibit creativity; and who write and speak with clarity and purpose.

Finally, there is a commitment within the core curriculum to engage with primary sources, i.e., original writings, research or productions by scholars, experts, artists, or thinkers. Interaction with primary sources, rather than other people's interpretations of them only, marks the entry into the process of inquiry and critical thinking. The ultimate aim is a curriculum grounded in the university's core values, which provides the kind of transformative education articulated in the university's mission and vision statements.