

Policy on General Studies

(Applicable to Undergraduate Only)

The general studies core is the breadth component of an undergraduate degree program. Majors and professional studies are the depth components.

General Studies in Biblical Higher Education

General studies encompass several subject areas, convey an advanced body of knowledge, and provide for the development of a high level of analytical and communicative skills that are expected of program graduates. General studies focus upon key concepts and philosophical issues in the various disciplines. Presuppositions and worldviews are examined in light of biblical principles. The integrating of biblical and general studies forms the basis for the development of a biblical worldview and provides a frame of reference for engaging those to whom graduates are called to minister.

Hence, it is essential to biblical higher education that an institution engage highly qualified general studies faculty with expertise in both their chosen academic fields and biblical studies; otherwise, the desired integration is less likely to take place. Institutions that have yet to assemble a qualified general studies faculty remain responsible for assisting students in integrating biblical and general studies and forming a biblical worldview. As a temporary measure, integrative seminars, analytical papers, and/or weekly consultation with a faculty member would help to facilitate the integration process for those students who must take general studies course work off-campus while enrolled at the institution. An interdisciplinary course designed to examine key concepts, presuppositions, philosophical bases, and worldviews should be required of all transfer students who have taken 25% or more of their general studies course work in a secular program.

Course Work Qualifying as General Studies

Standard 11a, Essential Element 11 states:

A core of general studies representative of the breadth of general studies and equivalent to 36 semester hours (54 quarter hours) for a baccalaureate degree or 18 semester hours (27 quarter hours) for an associate degree.

For general studies to indeed serve as the breadth component of a degree program, it is essential that the course work be general in nature and that the common core include a distribution requirement ensuring that students take courses from a number of disciplines, such as communications (composition and speech), fine arts (art and/or music), foreign language,

history (including world history), literature, mathematics, natural sciences (life and/or physical), philosophy, physical education, and social sciences. Hence, the general studies core must not be centered around only a few subject areas. An exemplary program will have a broadly distributed core, yet require that students extend two general studies disciplines to the second level, i.e., each built upon a prerequisite, and one to a third, i.e., built upon two prerequisites.

It is essential that general studies course work flow from the disciplinary categories listed in the criteria, e.g., biology, chemistry, and physics as natural sciences. Hence, courses that are professional in nature, e.g., business, education, do not qualify as general studies. Also, courses that qualify as biblical and theological studies, although having general education value in other contexts, do not qualify as general studies within the context of biblical higher education.

Ordinarily, only one general studies discipline will be extended to the third level. Under no circumstances will a fourth-level course be accepted in the general studies component. Such a course is too specialized to be classified as “general” and should rather be incorporated into a major or minor.

[Applicable Standards: 11a]

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