

GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

MISSION STATEMENT

General education at Appalachian is anchored in the ideals and practices of liberal education and is designed to prepare students for responsible lives in a changing world. By engaging in the discovery, interpretation, and creation of knowledge throughout the undergraduate curriculum and co-curriculum, students learn to adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from diverse sources, and continue learning throughout their lives. Recognizing the growing significance of an interconnected world, Appalachian's general education program also encourages meaningful connections between local regions, especially in the Southern Appalachian Mountains, and global contexts.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Appalachian's general education program prepares students for

- I. Communicating effectively**
- II. Thinking critically and creatively**
- III. Making local to global connections**
- IV. Understanding responsibilities of community membership**

I. Communicating effectively

Rationale:

The general education program prepares students to engage in the kind of communication that can help communities reach both authentic consensus and respectful disagreement. In a two-way interaction, communicating effectively leads to discovery and productive changes in the sender, who may be a writer, speaker, dancer, musician, visual artist, or actor, as well as in the receiver, who may be hearing, reading, or watching. As both senders and receivers, successful communicators interact effectively with people of both similar and different experiences and values. They adapt their communication skills with increasing fluency and sophistication to new and increasingly complex situations. Communicating effectively requires a high level of information, reading, quantitative, and technological literacy.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will articulate and comprehend effectively in contexts of increasing complexity, using verbal or non-verbal communication suitable to topic, purpose, and audience.
2. Students will use writing effectively to discover and develop ideas and to articulate positions in contexts of increasing complexity. They will make decisions appropriate to topic, purpose, and audience while correctly using the conventions of standard written English.
3. In specific research contexts, students will determine the scope of information needed, and they will successfully identify, locate, evaluate, use, and communicate information from various media.
4. Students will read actively and analytically at the college level and will synthesize and apply information and ideas from their reading across disciplines.
5. Students will know, apply, and communicate college-level mathematical concepts and methods.
6. Students will effectively select and use hardware, software applications, databases, and other technologies for both inquiry and communication.

II. Thinking critically and creatively

Rationale:

Appalachian's general education program seeks to cultivate lifelong learners who can understand, question, revise, and generate knowledge through thinking that is both *critical* in its analysis and evaluation of knowledge and *creative* in its integration and generation of knowledge. Critical and creative thinkers are conscious of how their own positions influence their thought, and they also adjust their thinking as they interpret, evaluate, and reflect based on increasingly sophisticated intellectual values. Critical and creative thought requires the ability to integrate knowledge from a variety of domains and to transfer knowledge from one domain to another, while at the same time recognizing the distinctiveness and limitations of different theoretical paradigms. Therefore, this ability is best fostered by interdisciplinary approaches to learning and by the employment of a variety of critical and creative strategies, including reading, writing, observing, quantifying, using the scientific method, translating, creating, and performing.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will recognize, differentiate, and effectively employ appropriate and increasingly sophisticated strategies for the collection of information and its interpretation.
2. Students will successfully integrate disparate concepts and information when interpreting, solving problems, evaluating, creating, and making decisions.
3. Students will identify and account for their own personal, historical, and cultural perspectives in the discovery and generation of knowledge.
4. Students will construct well-reasoned, persuasive arguments in increasingly complex contexts.
5. Students will effectively apply theories from a variety of disciplines and will provide convincing reasons to connect as well as differentiate theories from different domains of knowledge.

III. Making local to global connections**Rationale:**

Appalachian State University is both in and of the southern Appalachian region, and it is also part of a world that is globally connected. Life in the twenty-first century requires an understanding of the connections and multi-layered interactions among diverse local and global human cultures, as well as between humans and the natural and physical world. In this context, the general education program helps to cultivate an active understanding of global change and the effect of human agency on both natural and cultural environments. It is important for students to understand the importance of biodiversity, ecological integrity, and the need for development that achieves sustainable benefits for communities. Knowledge of other cultures, diverse cultural frames of reference, and alternative perspectives are essential to thinking critically and creatively and to understanding the responsibilities of membership in local, regional, and global communities. The establishment and maintenance of intercultural relationships require active cultural understanding, which is achieved by exploring multiple strategies for interacting with other peoples and cultures.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will know significant aspects of the relationship between humans and the natural and physical environment.
2. Students will evaluate community, natural, and global change through the lens of sustainability.

3. Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically and creatively about the relationship between their own local region or regions (especially the southern Appalachian region) and global issues, processes, trends, and systems.
4. Students will demonstrate knowledge of contemporary issues related to cultural diversity in the United States and other areas of the world.
5. Students will demonstrate the skills and knowledge necessary for establishing and maintaining intercultural relationships.

IV. Understanding responsibilities of community membership

Rationale:

General education prepares academically skilled and engaged citizens capable of contributing to the betterment of society as leaders, voters, consumers, and community members. Responsible contribution to communities requires a basic understanding of the ways in which governments, economies, and societies function. Moral reasoning skills, necessary in a world characterized by often conflicting moral beliefs and attitudes, enable students to reflect critically on moral issues and to make reasonable judgments about complex moral problems. Effective moral reasoning includes the ability to question one's own assumptions and beliefs, to understand the reasoning of others, and to disagree about important matters in a respectful and civil manner. An understanding of the broad range of reasonable moral positions must be accompanied by shared beliefs regarding honesty, integrity, and obligation to others. In addition, fostering the well-being and personal development of students will help them lead thoughtful and purposeful lives in their communities.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will identify the impacts that personal choices and political, economic, and other social forces have on individual, societal, and environmental health.
2. Students will practice appropriate moral reasoning skills concerning ethical issues confronted by individuals, groups, and communities.
3. Students will collaborate with others effectively in shared processes of inquiry and problem-solving.
4. Students will apply principles of responsible community membership as members of the campus community and beyond.