

9.3 General education requirements

The institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the undergraduate level that:

- (a) is based on a coherent rationale.
- (b) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree program. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent.
- (c) ensures breadth of knowledge. These credit hours include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/ behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. These courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession.

Compliance Judgment: In Compliance

Rationale

As specified in the [mission statement](#) ^[1], all programs of study at USC Aiken, “are grounded in a strong liberal arts and sciences curriculum.” As a member of the [Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges \(COPLAC\)](#) ^[2], the institution emphasizes the importance and benefits of providing students with comprehensive public higher education in the liberal arts and sciences by challenging students to think critically and creatively, to communicate effectively, to learn independently, and to acquire depth of knowledge in chosen fields. A substantial portion of all programs of study consists of a common core of classes that provide a breadth of experience in the critical disciplines that serve as the foundation of a liberal arts education.

Based on a coherent rationale. USC Aiken's general education is based on [the Liberal Education and America's Promise \(LEAP\) campaign of the Association of American Colleges and Universities](#).^[3] The LEAP learning outcomes establish a framework for the general education core of all USC Aiken undergraduate programs and align with the [institution's core values](#).^[4] The LEAP framework consists of:

- **Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world.** This is accomplished through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts with a focus on student engagement in contemporary and enduring questions.
- **Intellectual and practical skills.** This includes inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork, and problem solving. These skills are practiced extensively across the curriculum in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance.
- **Personal and social responsibility.** This includes local and global civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning. This objective is anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges.
- **Integrative and applied learning.** This includes synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies, and is demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.

Substantial portion of each undergraduate program. All courses at USC Aiken use the semester credit hour as the unit of credit. As shown in Table 9.3, between 50 and 59 semester hours are required for general education, representing 35% to 49% of required coursework depending upon the combination of degree program, concentration, electives, and general education course options.

Table 9.3. General Education Semester Hours for Programs of Study

Program of Study (links to the requirements for each program)	Overall Hours	Gen Ed Hours	Percent Gen Ed
Bachelor of Arts (Biology)	120	51-54	43%-45%
Bachelor of Arts (Chemistry)	120	57-59	48%-49%
Bachelor of Arts (Communication)	120	50-53	42%-44%
Bachelor of Arts (Communication and Digital Arts)	120	50-53	42%-44%
Bachelor of Arts (English)	120	50-53	42%-44%
Bachelor of Arts (Fine Arts)	120	50-53	42%-44%
Bachelor of Arts (History)	120	56-59	47%-49%
Bachelor of Arts (Music)	120	50-53	42%-44%
Bachelor of Arts (Political Science)	120	56-59	47%-49%
Bachelor of Arts (Sociology)	120	53-56	44%-47%
Bachelor of Arts in Education (Early Childhood Education)	120	51-53	43%-44%
Bachelor of Arts in Education (Elementary Education)	126-128	55-57	44%-45%
Bachelor of Arts in Education (Middle Level Education)	123-130	50-53	40%-42%
Bachelor of Arts in Education (Secondary Education)	120-144	50-54	40%-43%
Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies	120	50-53	42%-44%
Bachelor of Arts in Special Education	128-132	50-53	39%-40%
Bachelor of Arts in Special Education <i>online completion</i>	128-132	50-53	39%-40%
Bachelor of Fine Arts (Writing)	120	50-53	42%-44%
Bachelor of Science (Applied Computer Science)	120	51-53	43%-44%
Bachelor of Science (Applied Mathematics)	120	53-55	44%-46%
Bachelor of Science (Biology)	120	51-54	43%-45%
Bachelor of Science (Chemistry)	120-124	57-59	46%-49%
Bachelor of Science (Clinical Laboratory Science)	120	51-54	43%-45%
Bachelor of Science (Exercise and Sports Science)	121-129	51-53	40%-44%
Bachelor of Science (Industrial Process Engineering)	129	55	43%
Bachelor of Science (Psychology)	120	53-56	44%-47%
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration	121-124	53-56	43%-46%
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration <i>online completion</i>	121-124	53-56	43%-46%
Bachelor of Science in Education (Secondary Education)	130-143	50-54	35%-40%
Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies	120	50-53	42%-44%
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (Nursing)	125	56	45%
Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN-BSN) <i>online completion</i>	120	55	46%

Breadth of knowledge. The general education core ensures a broad foundation of skills and competencies in oral and written communication and quantitative skills that all recipients of a baccalaureate degree should possess. In addition, baccalaureate

recipients should have a foundational knowledge of the methods and history of various disciplines including the natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, humanities, world civilizations, and American political institutions. The general education program includes a minimum of:

- 6 semester hours of English writing;
- 6 semester hours of math, statistics and logic;
- 3 semester hours of oral communication;
- 7 semester hours of natural sciences;
- 6 semester hours of social and behavioral sciences;
- 3 semester hours of history of civilization;
- 3 semester hours of American political institutions;
- 9 semester hours of humanities; and
- 1 semester hour of critical inquiry.

For all degree programs other than business administration, nursing, engineering, and exercise science, students must also complete 6-8 semester hours of a foreign language.

Although general education requirements take the form of individual courses, integration and application of knowledge is critical to the learning experience. Toward this end, students must complete a minimum of three classes designated as writing intensive, one of which must be in their major; successfully pass a writing proficiency portfolio; and participate in the Inter-Curricular Enrichment (ICE) program.

Writing Intensive (WI) courses require 15-20 pages of word-processed written work as part of the overall grade. Each WI class must include explicit instruction in writing as it relates to a given discipline, and students must have the opportunity to benefit from the instructor's comments as they revise and edit their written work. Instructor comments focus on some combination of clarity of purpose, quality of thought, organization of content, synthesis and integration of sources, attribution and documentation of sources, language and style, and grammar and usage as appropriate within the discipline.

The proficiency portfolio in writing, which must be submitted between the completion of sixty and ninety credit hours, serves to certify each student's writing proficiency within the context of general education assessment and to make all students aware of the necessity for developing and transferring their writing skills beyond the composition course sequence.

The Inter-Curricular Enrichment (ICE) program is designed to broadening students' cultural and intellectual perspectives. Students must attend two approved events such as lectures, theater performances, films, concerts, and exhibits each semester up to a total of 16 events over their four-year college career.

Dissemination and assurance of general education requirements. As illustrated in Table 9.3 above, the general education core includes course options to meet each academic area. Some programs of study are more prescriptive than others of courses that students should take in order to meet pre-requisites of upper-level major classes and to complete the program in a timely manner. Definitions and course options for each academic area of the general education core are delineated in the [Academic Programs Bulletin](#).^[5], which is published annually and made available to students online. The specific general education requirements for each major is clearly delineated for each program of study in the Bulletin (see links to each via Table 9.3 above). Students are also guided by faculty advisors within their major and with online guidance forms in an enterprise software platform called Degree Works.

In accord with the transfer policy published in the [Academic Programs Bulletin](#)^[6], transfer students are given credit for previous college work after careful evaluation by a team of evaluators. A student is notified via email that the evaluation has been completed and that the student may review the resulting evaluation by using Degree Works. Each transfer course will show the equivalency to an appropriate USC Aiken offering. Following admission to USC Aiken, if a student wishes to earn credits for coursework at another institution, he or she must complete a Special Enrollment Request and obtain approval from the academic advisor and the appropriate department chair/school dean prior to enrollment. Only undergraduate courses taken at a regionally accredited institution of higher education which are comparable in content

and credit hours to specific courses offered by USC Aiken and in which grades of “C” or better have been earned will be accepted for transfer.

Illustrative examples of the Degree Works guidance forms in which a student transferred credit toward fulfillment of general education requirements are provided for the [Bachelor of Arts in Communication](#)^[7] and the [Bachelor of Science in Psychology](#)^[8] programs of study. Personnel in the Registrar’s office use Degree Works to conduct degree audits to assure all requirements have been met when students apply for graduation.

Determination and oversight of general education requirements. Oversight of general education requirements resides with the [General Education Committee](#),^[9] a standing committee of the Faculty Assembly. The definitions of academic areas and the LEAP framework provide guidance to the General Education Committee as they determine which classes can fulfill general education requirements. Minutes of meetings held by the General Education Committee on [April 11, 2015](#)^[10] and [April 3, 2017](#)^[11] are provided to illustrate deliberations of proposed use of specific classes to fulfill general education areas.

Supporting Documentation

1. [University South Carolina Aiken mission statement](#)
2. [COPLAC website](#)
3. [Association of American Colleges and Universities’ LEAP campaign website](#)
4. [University of South Carolina Aiken core values](#)
5. [Academic Programs Bulletin: General Education](#)
6. [Academic Programs Bulletin: Transfer credit policy](#)
7. [Example of a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Degree Works audit](#)
8. [Example of a Bachelor of Science in Psychology Degree Works audit](#)
9. [Faculty Manual: General Education Committee description](#)
10. [General Education Committee meeting minutes of April 11, 2015](#)
11. [General Education Committee meeting minutes of April 3, 2017](#)