To help students to gain an appreciation of the range of knowledge and diversity of approaches in the arts and sciences, the general education curriculum requires students to take seven courses that span the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. This requirement is designed to ensure the breadth of knowledge essential to the educated inhabitant of a complex world. It is also designed to expose students to the variety of disciplines and approaches to knowledge pursued in the modern university early enough in their courses of study to help them make informed choices about their majors and the rest of their studies.

Five of these courses are to be based in sectors that reflect the faculty’s collective judgment about a useful and informative way to organize the great variety of humankind’s intellectual and social accomplishments to the present time and the many ways in which human beings interact with their ever-expanding environment. The classification of these courses thus cuts across departmental lines in many cases, reflecting the complexity of knowledge in the modern world.

The sixth and seventh courses in this part of the general education requirement provide an opportunity for students to explore an area outside their major in greater depth, to expand further their exploration of the range of approaches to knowledge represented in the arts and sciences, or to engage in interdisciplinary courses in which approaches from several disciplines in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences will be introduced, and the perspectives of diverse cultures will be considered.

Each sector description that follows includes a series of questions designed to guide faculty seeking to develop courses for approval and to assist the Committee on the Sector Requirements in evaluating the courses that are presented to it. The questions reflect a student-centered pedagogy that focuses on intellectual competencies that students might be expected to gain by taking a course in a specific sector. They are guidelines only and are not meant to exhaust the possibilities in each category, nor are courses expected to meet all or even a majority of these guidelines in order to gain acceptance into a sector.

*General Considerations Concerning All General Education Courses*

General education courses should support breadth in a student’s education and should make an explicit attempt to expose students to modes of inquiry and the ways of interpreting and creating knowledge that are embodied in different disciplines. These courses should be broad, not necessarily as introductions to bodies of knowledge or in the amount of material they cover, but primarily in the questions they open up for students, in the understanding of inquiry in one or more disciplines that they foster, and in the suggestion of areas for additional study that students may pursue. General education courses should inspire students to pursue intellectually rigorous undergraduate careers and to avoid paths of least resistance. Ideally, general education should also stimulate a sense of community and intellectual discourse among students by presenting them with issues, both classic and modern, in which they can engage.
with one another both in and out of the classroom. Students can then build upon their
general education courses both in terms of finding a specific area of study (the major)
and in pursuing other interests with their electives.
Society

This sector focuses on the structure and norms of contemporary human societies, including their psychological and cultural dimensions.

Courses in this sector use many analytical techniques that have been developed to study contemporary society, with its complex relations between individuals and larger forms of mass participation. Some Society courses are largely devoted to the analysis of aggregate forms of human behavior (encounters, markets, civil society, nations, supranational organizations, and so on), while others may focus on the relations between individuals and their various societies. While historical materials may be studied, the primary objective of Society courses is to enable students to develop concepts and principles, test theories and perfect tools that can be used to interpret, explain and evaluate the behavior of human beings in contemporary societies. This objective will be realized in relation to the specific content of the various courses, but the emphasis in each course should be on developing in students a general capacity for social analysis and understanding.

1. Does this course allow students to formulate and test social science hypotheses?
2. Does the course provide students with an understanding of social theories?
3. Will students understand the basis of empirical social science?
4. Will students gather and interpret data about social phenomena?
5. Does the course encourage students’ understanding of culture, religion, class, gender, race, or other fundamental social constructs?
6. Does the course enable students to understand the role of institutions in society, the relationship between individuals and those institutions, or the relationship among ideologies, values, and individual behavior?
History and Tradition

This sector focuses on studies of continuity and change in human thought, belief and action.

Understanding both ancient and modern civilizations provides students with an essential perspective on contemporary life. Courses in this sector examine the histories of diverse civilizations, their cultures and forms of expression, their formal and informal belief systems and ideologies, and the record of their human actors. Students should learn to interpret primary sources, to identify and discuss their core intellectual issues, to understand the social contexts in which these sources were created, to pose questions about their validity and ability to represent broader perspectives, and to write persuasive essays about them.

1. Does this course allow students to read and interpret primary sources?
2. Will students be able to contextualize the primary materials they examine?
3. Will students closely read materials and discuss their core ideas?
4. Will students learn to interpret visual or material objects?
5. Do students have the opportunity to write significant interpretive essays about the sources they study?
6. Does the course provide students with an interpretive framework for analyzing change over time?
Arts and Letters

This sector encompasses the means and meaning of visual arts, literature and music, together with the criticism surrounding them.

Most courses in this sector are concerned with works of creativity—paintings, films, poetry, fiction, theatre, dance and music. They generally address a considerable breadth of material rather than an individual work or artist. The objective of Arts and Letters courses is to confront students with works of creativity; cultivate their powers of perception (visual, textual, auditory); and equip them with tools for analysis, interpretation, and criticism. This objective will be realized in relation to the specific content of the various courses, but the emphasis in each course should be on developing and strengthening in students a general capacity for understanding meaning and the ways in which it is achieved in its distinctive environment of culture and moment.

1. Does the course allow students to develop interpretive strategies for analyzing visual, aural or literary texts?

2. Does the course offer students ample opportunity to write significant interpretive essays?

3. Does the course allow students to develop an appreciation of the creative process within a medium or in a variety of artistic media?

4. If a course is narrowly focused, does it provide for breadth through understanding the social context or continuing significance of the work(s) being analyzed?
The Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS)

Students should engage with diverse approaches to society, history, tradition and the arts more deeply than a single course from each domain can allow. Greater depth of experience can be accomplished either by greater focus on one area, by study in a related area, by bringing to bear the various humanistic and social perspectives upon a single issue or topic, or by engaging directly in academically-based activities informed by these perspectives.

In this sector, students may pursue further exposure to a discipline in sector I, II or III by taking an additional course therein or seek to broaden their perspective by taking a course in the humanities or social sciences that has been approved as a general education course but that cuts across two or more of the three sectors. Other courses approved for this sector will seek a more integrative approach by addressing a problem or topic from a variety of disciplinary perspectives in the manner of Pilot Curriculum courses. Still others will combine disciplinary study with community service or activism, and constructively and reflectively connect the theoretical with the actual. Finally, courses in the arts that combine creative or performance experience with reflection and grounding within a discipline will be approved for this sector.

1. Does the course integrate theory with practical applications?
2. Are students allowed the opportunity to reflect on practice?
3. Does the course allow students to integrate approaches from two or more humanities or social science disciplines?
4. Does the course place creative practice in writing, music or the fine arts in an interpretive context?
The Living World

This sector deals substantively with the evolution, development, structure and/or function of living systems.

Courses in this sector study the variety of approaches that are useful in understanding living organisms, ranging from analyses at the molecular and cellular level to analyses of evolution and adaptation to environments. Students learn the methods used by contemporary natural science to study these topics, including ways in which hypotheses are developed, tested, and reformulated in light of ever-increasing research findings. A full understanding of living organisms incorporates insights from approaches at many different levels.
The Physical World

This sector focuses on the methodology and concepts of physical science.

Courses in this sector aim to provide insight into the content and workings of modern physical science. Some courses in this sector are part of a major, while others are designed primarily to provide an introduction to their field for non-science majors. Courses for non-science majors may include some discussion of the historical development of the subject as well as the most important conceptual notions and their mathematical expressions. All courses in this sector seek to demonstrate the generally accepted paradigm of modern science: experiment and observation suggest mathematically formulated theories, which are then tested by comparison with new experiments and observations.

All courses in this sector shall have and use a significant mathematical prerequisite (serious high school algebra through an introduction to calculus), that is, students will actually be expected to use mathematical methods and concepts to achieve an understanding of the subjects they concern.
The Natural Sciences and Mathematics (NSM)

Similarly, students should engage with the diverse approaches to the natural sciences and mathematics more deeply than a single course from the physical and life sciences would allow. Greater depth of experience can be accomplished either by greater focus on one area, by study in a related area, by bringing to bear various scientific perspectives upon a single issue or topic, or by engaging directly in academically-based activities informed by these perspectives.

In this sector, students may pursue further exposure to a discipline in sector IV or V by taking an additional course therein, or seek to broaden their perspective by taking a course in the natural sciences or mathematics that has been approved as a general education course but that cuts across the two sectors. Other courses approved for this sector will seek a more integrative approach by addressing a problem or topic from a variety of disciplinary perspectives in the manner of Pilot Curriculum courses. Still others will combine disciplinary study with community service or activism, and constructively and reflectively connect the theoretical with the actual.
Note about the two new sectors (HSS and NSM)

It is conceivable that an interdisciplinary or academically-based community service course might span an area or areas contained in the Society, History & Tradition, and Arts & Letters as well as one or more parts of Living World and Physical World (for example a course that focuses on the mathematics and physics of music). Such a course could be approved for both HSS and NSM, and could be used by a student to satisfy either (but not both) sectors.