

# Essential Studies Program, Pathways, and Levels of Achievement

## The Essential Studies Program

The Essential Studies program is structured to provide an intentional progression via six pathways from foundation, through practice, to capstone levels of student achievement based on the university's six Essential Student Learning Outcomes (ESLOs). Levels of achievement are described at the foundation, practice, and capstone levels for each pathway and are supported by essential foundational and practicing-level coursework, program-integrated practicing-level coursework, a synthesis course and a capstone experience. This document will describe the pathways and levels of achievement in detail.

Courses will be approved by ESLO Committees to support a particular pathway at a particular level of achievement. Courses will be taught by content area experts, determined by a representative department(s), to satisfy the established ESLO criteria at a particular level of achievement:

Pathways, ESLO Committees, and Representative Departments

Pathway (and ESLO Committee)	Department(s)
Communication	Communication
Inquiry and Analysis	Humanities and Social Sciences Natural Sciences
Ethical Reasoning	Humanities and Social Sciences
Teamwork	Communication
Quantitative Literacy	Applied Mathematics
Diverse Perspectives	Communication Humanities and Social Sciences

## Relationship to Current General Education Requirements

The Essential Studies program maintains 47 credits in the university's current general education program, which is articulated in terms of distribution requirements:

- Humanities – 9 credits
- Social Science – 12 credits
- Communication – 18 credits
- Natural Science – 4 credits
- Mathematics – 4 credits

Accreditation and program constraints will ensure that programs have the necessary Math and Science to support their technical goals, alleviating the need for the math/science/social science block requirements in the current model. The primary goal of the Essential Studies program is to support student achievement at the capstone level in the six ESLOs. Disciplinary breadth in traditional general education disciplines represented by the previous distribution requirements has also been maintained.

## Pathways

The requirements of the six pathways are each described here individually from the foundation to capstone level. Rubrics for each ESLO clearly describe the criteria and level of proficiency that must be demonstrated by the student at each level.

### Communication

- Foundation: 9 credits (WRI121, WRI122, SPE111)
- Essential Practice: at least 3 credits from the practicing communication list
- Program-Integrated Practice: one or two courses selected by the major program that address written and oral criteria in the context of the major
- ESSE: Practice-level communication criteria will be demonstrated in an ESSE course
- Capstone: Capstone-level communication will be demonstrated in a capstone experience defined by the major program

### Inquiry and Analysis

- Foundation: 3 credits humanities, 3 credits social sciences, 4 credits lab-based natural sciences
- Essential Practice: 3 credits humanities, 3 credits sciences (outside of areas that traditionally support the major)
- Program-Integrated Practice: one course selected by the major program that addresses practicing-level inquiry and analysis in the context of the major
- ESSE: Practice-level inquiry and analysis criteria will be demonstrated in an ESSE course
- Capstone: Capstone-level inquiry and analysis will be demonstrated in a capstone experience defined by the major program

### Ethical Reasoning

- Foundation: one course within or prescribed by the major that introduces ethical reasoning
- Essential Practice: 3 credits from the ethical reasoning list
- Program-Integrated Practice: one course selected by the major program that integrates ethical reasoning in the context of the major
- ESSE: Practice-level ethical reasoning criteria will be demonstrated in an ESSE course
- Capstone: Capstone-level ethical reasoning will be demonstrated in a capstone experience defined by the major program

### Teamwork

- Foundation: 3 credits (SPE 221 Small Group and Team Communication)
- Program-Integrated Practice: one course selected by the major program that integrates teamwork in the context of the major
- ESSE: Practice-level teamwork criteria will be demonstrated in an ESSE course
- Capstone: Capstone-level teamwork will be demonstrated in a capstone experience defined by the major program

### Quantitative Literacy

- Foundation: 4 credits in statistics (MATH 243 or MATH 361)
- Essential Practice: 3 credits from the quantitative literacy list

- Program-Integrated Practice: one course selected by the major program that integrates quantitative literacy in the context of the major
- ESSE: Practice-level quantitative literacy criteria will be demonstrated in an ESSE course
- Capstone: Capstone-level quantitative literacy will be demonstrated in a capstone experience defined by the major program

#### Diverse Perspectives

- Foundation: 3 credits from the foundational diverse perspectives list
- Essential Practice: 3 credits from the practicing diverse perspectives list
- Program-Integrated Practice: one course selected by the major program that integrates diverse perspectives in the context of the major
- ESSE: Practice-level diverse perspectives criteria will be demonstrated in an ESSE course
- Capstone: Capstone-level diverse perspectives will be demonstrated in a capstone experience defined by the major program

#### **Levels of Achievement**

The Essential Studies program is developmental in design, beginning with a broad foundation in traditional general education courses, supported by additional practice in general and program coursework, and culminating in a capstone experience.

All courses in the Essential Studies program must be approved by GEAC to satisfy the criteria for the designated pathway and level of achievement.

#### Foundation

The foundation level provides a broad education in areas outside of the major allowing for personal growth and exploration. Foundational courses guide students via intensive work in a highly structured environment to learn new skills, gather tools, and acquire basic factual knowledge that supports the ESLOs. Assignments at this level are likely to be guided and scaffolded. Active learning is appropriate at this level.

The foundational level consists of a minimum of 29 credits taught by content area experts:

- Communication: 9 credits in written and spoken communication (WRI121, WRI122, SPE111)
- Inquiry and Analysis: 10 credits from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences (from a list of approved courses)
- Ethical Reasoning: a major program or major program-specified course must address ethical reasoning at the foundation level
- Teamwork: 3 credits (SPE221)
- Quantitative Literacy: 4 credits in statistics (MATH 243 or MATH 361)
- Diverse Perspectives: 3 credits (from a list of approved courses)

Courses at the foundation level may be approved to support no more than two pathways. Different courses must be used to satisfy the 29-credit minimum at this level. A single course may satisfy no more than one pathway.

## Practice

The purpose of practice level courses is to build on foundational knowledge and skills through intensive work in continued general education, major coursework, and cross-disciplinary experiences. Assignments reflect moderate scaffolding, but students are learning how to work with unstructured/open-ended problems and situations. Students learn how to apply skills and tools in a moderately structured environment.

The practicing level consists of essential practice courses, program-integrated practice courses, and an Essential Studies Synthesis Experience.

## Essential Practice

Essential Practice courses provide a wide variety opportunities for advanced work in general education courses taught by content area experts. Students will demonstrate ESLO criteria beyond the foundational level.

The essential practice courses consist of a minimum of 15 credits in courses supporting

- Communication
- Inquiry and Analysis – Humanities
- Inquiry and Analysis – Sciences
- Ethical Reasoning
- Quantitative Literacy
- Diverse Perspectives

Essential practice courses may be approved to support up to two pathways, and all pathway designations above are considered.

## Program-Integrated Practice

The purpose of program-integrated practice is to integrate student learning, founded in previous Essential Studies courses, into the major course of study. Students transfer essential knowledge and skills through direct application in disciplinary contexts.

The program-integrated practice courses along with appropriate foundation level prerequisites are selected by the major program and no more than two pathways may be supported by a single course. Pathways that must be supported are Communication (written and oral), Inquiry and Analysis, Ethical Reasoning, Teamwork, Quantitative Literacy, and Diverse Perspectives.

## Essential Studies Synthesis Experience

A student must take a course designated as an Essential Studies Synthesis Experience (ESSE). The purpose of the ESSE is, as its name suggests, to synthesize the learning in all six pathways and apply it at the practicing level in a single course, ideally prior to the capstone experience.

These courses should be interdisciplinary in nature (by topic, major, faculty or student team) and may be taught by anyone in any department at the university, but they are developed collaboratively with the sponsorship of one of the following departments: Communication, Humanities and Social Sciences, Natural

Sciences, or Applied Mathematics. At least one foundational course in each pathway must be completed prior to a student taking an ESSE course.

### Capstone

The Essential Studies Capstone is a culminating experience unique to each major program where students demonstrate proficiency at a level expected at completion of the bachelor's degree.

The capstone level of achievement in each pathway must be demonstrated by a student in a capstone project, course(s), externship or experience identified by the major program, preferably in the senior year, within the context of the major program, and not necessarily in a single course or experience. Students are given opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in unstructured environments and work independently to address unscripted problems. At this level, students are expected to meet the criteria with minimal or no prompting, scaffolding is essentially gone.

The Essential Studies Program requirements are summarized and may be visualized using the following table.

<b>CAPSTONE</b>	<b>Capstone Experience</b>							
<b>SYNTHESIS (3 credits)</b>	<b>Essential Studies Synthesis Experience</b> 3 cr: _____							
<b>PROGRAM- INTEGRATED PRACTICE</b>	Program-integrated: Written _____ Oral _____	Program-integrated: _____			Program-integrated: _____	Program-integrated: _____	Program-integrated: _____	Program-integrated: _____
<b>ESSENTIAL PRACTICE (15 credits minimum)</b>	<u>Practice List</u> _____	<u>Humanities Practice List</u> _____	<u>Sciences Practice List</u> _____		<u>Practice List</u> _____	Program-integrated: _____	<u>Practice List</u> _____	<u>Practice List</u> _____
<b>FOUNDATION (29 credits minimum)</b>	3 cr: <u>WRI 122</u>	3 cr: _____	3 cr: _____	4 cr: _____ Laboratory-based science course	<u>Foundation List</u> _____	3cr: <u>SPE 221</u> Small Group and Team; currently listed as SPE 321	4cr: <u>MATH 243</u> or <u>361</u> Statistics	<u>Foundation List</u> 3 cr: _____
3 cr: <u>WRI 121</u>	Program-integrated foundational ethical reasoning in a program course or program-specified course							
3cr: <u>SPE 111</u>	_____							
Communication	Humanities	Social Sciences		Natural Sciences	Ethical Reasoning	Teamwork	Quantitative Literacy	Diverse Perspectives
	Inquiry and Analysis							