General Education curriculum

The General Education curriculum at Missouri Southern is a carefully designed series of courses that all students earning a bachelor's degree must complete. It is our effort to furnish you a liberal education. But why? What about the General Education is so important that it constitutes nearly half of the credit hours necessary for your degree?

One way to answer that question is to reflect on another: What does it mean to be well-educated? While the question has generated much debate and there is no simple answer, most agree that a well-educated person possesses certain fundamental intellectual skills, a broad knowledge of the world and a deep knowledge of a particular subject. While pursuit of a major field of study furnishes knowledge in depth, it is the General Education curriculum that seeks to arm you with the intellectual skills and the breadth of knowledge that characterize well-educated and socially responsible individuals.

Goals of the General Education curriculum

The University accepts four intellectual skills as essential for well-educated people:

**Communicating:** Well-educated people develop effective use of the English language and quantitative and other symbolic systems essential to their success in school and in the world. Students should be able to read and listen critically and to write and speak with thoughtfulness, clarity, coherence and persuasiveness.

**Higher-Order Thinking:** Well-educated people develop the ability to distinguish among opinions, facts and inferences; to identify underlying or implicit assumptions; to make informed judgments; and to solve problems by applying evaluative standards.

**Valuing:** Well-educated people develop abilities to understand the moral and ethical values of a diverse society and to understand that many courses of action are guided by value judgments about the way things ought to be. Students should be able to make informed decisions through identifying personal values and the values of others and through understanding how such values develop. They should be able to analyze the ethical implications of choices made on the basis of these values.

**Managing Information:** Well-educated people develop abilities to locate organize, store, retrieve, evaluate, synthesize and annotate information from print, electronic and other sources in preparation for solving problems and making informed decisions.

The University accepts seven broad areas of knowledge as necessary for well-educated people to understand and function effectively in today's complex and changing world.

**Social and Behavioral Sciences:** Well-educated people develop an understanding of themselves and the world around them through study of content and the processes used by historians and social and behavioral scientists to discover, describe, explain and predict human behavior and social systems. Students must understand the diversities and complexities of the cultural and social world, past and present and come to an informed sense of self and others.
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International Mission: The world is changing rapidly and dramatically. The future will belong to those who have an understanding and appreciation for the world beyond the boundaries of their country. That is why Missouri Southern has chosen to emphasize a global perspective throughout our entire curriculum and wherever possible to add an international dimension to our courses.

Enrichment Programs: Your opportunity for total education is enriched through a variety of special programs including the Honors Program, internships and independent study opportunities, involvement with the student media and "themed" semesters that focus on a country, continent or section of the world. Study abroad opportunities include the Summer in Sweden art program; language immersion programs in France, Germany, France, and China.

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Humanities and Fine Arts: Well-educated people develop an understanding of the ways in which humans have addressed their condition through imaginative work in the humanities and fine arts. They deepen their understanding of how that imaginative process is informed and limited by social, cultural, linguistic and historical circumstances and by learning to appreciate the world of the creative imagination as a form of knowledge.

Mathematics: Well-educated people develop an understanding of fundamental mathematical concepts and their applications. Students should develop a level of quantitative literacy that would enable them to make decisions and solve problems and which could serve as a basis for continued learning.

Life and Physical Sciences: Well-educated people develop an understanding of the principles and laboratory procedures of life and physical sciences and cultivate their abilities to apply the empirical methods of scientific inquiry. Students should understand how scientific discovery changes theoretical views of the world, informs our imaginations and shapes human history. Students should also understand that science is shaped by historical and social contexts.

International Cultural Studies: Well-educated people develop an understanding of how cultures and societies around the world are formed, sustained and evolve. Students should understand world affairs, international issues and cultures other than their own as seen through the history, geography, language, literature, philosophy, economics or politics of the cultures. Students will acquire empathy for the values and perspectives of cultures other than their own and an awareness of the international and multicultural influences in their own lives.

Health and Wellness: Well-educated people develop the knowledge and self-management skills that will assist them in adopting healthy lifestyles. This encompasses all areas of wellness: physical, emotional, spiritual, social and intellectual. Students will understand the relationship between lifestyle management, quality of life and societal health and productivity.

In addition to the General Education goals and to equip students to meet the technological demands of the 21st century, MSSU requires all its graduates to demonstrate computer literacy.

While you are a student at Missouri Southern, you will also benefit from the emphasis placed, both in the General Education and the majors, on two essential areas, writing and international education. First, because writing is among the most crucial skills, Southern ensures that writing permeates the total course of study, starting in freshman composition courses and continuing through writing intensive courses in each major. Second, as detailed elsewhere in this catalog, Southern has a special emphasis in international education. An awareness of other peoples, languages and cultures is becoming increasingly necessary. Southern strives to promote a global perspective in every possible course, including those in the General Education.

Thanks to technological resources and the commitment of our faculty, students have the opportunity to complete many of the General Education courses in modes that suit their individual schedules and needs. While Missouri Southern offers all of the General Education courses in traditional classroom settings, students who possess the skills and responsibility required for success in General Education courses offered in non-traditional modes, such as on-line and televised courses, will be able to do so.
Mexico and Spain; and semester-long exchange programs throughout the world. Short-term study abroad experiences, including comparative trips and on-site classes, introduce students to aspects of another country’s culture in order to expand their views beyond the U.S. perspective.

**Total Collegiate Experience:** A great deal of college education happens outside the classroom. An array of extracurricular activities is offered to meet almost every academic and social interest. In addition, numerous services are available for the student to meet educational and personal needs.

**Assessment of Outcomes:** Missouri Southern continually assesses the effectiveness of its programs, including the General education curriculum and all the majors. The assessment information helps us revise and improve our programs. In this way, we ensure our curriculum is dynamic and up-to-date.

**Diverse Student Body:** Students at Southern represent a wide variety of ages and places of origin. The sizable enrollment of nontraditional students (those over 25) and international students is a great advantage. On our campus, students come to see each other as friends and allies and learn to develop healthy and supportive relationships with a variety of people.

**Flexible Class Scheduling:** Day and evening classes, hybrid classes, delayed start and intersession classes are available to students for the purposes of flexible scheduling. The Division of Lifelong Learning provides a variety of forms of access to education to meet the needs of today’s students. Access to educational opportunities is provided through Internet, blended Internet, on-ground (hybrid), and Internet television (ITV) classes.

More complete information on each of these features is found in the catalog. And of course, our faculty and staff are always willing to help you to make the most of your college experience. Don’t hesitate to ask. We’re here for you!