

SELECTED
PATHWAYS
DOCUMENTS

PATHWAYS

AHEAD

Table of Contents

History and Rationale for Current Pathways General Education Structure and Policies	1
Why Pathways Will Strengthen the Quality and Value of a CUNY Degree	5
Pathways General Education Requirements at CUNY: Q & A.....	7
Pathways Resolution	11

SELECTED PATHWAYS DOCUMENTS

History and Rationale for Current Pathways General Education Structure and Policies

(created February 2013)

30 Credits as the Maximum Size of the Common Core for AA, AS, and Baccalaureate Students

- In order to facilitate the transfer of CUNY students, who transfer in every possible direction within CUNY, and so that students do not get new, additional, requirements when they transfer, the Common Core needs to have the same framework for both community and senior colleges.
- The required credits for many AA and AS degrees summed with 30 general education credits totals 57-60 credits, and many more total 54-56 credits.
- These are typical sizes (nationally) for associate degree majors.
- Therefore, unless they take credits over the total number required for their degrees (typically, 60), associate-degree students have very few, if any, electives.
- Therefore, if AA and AS students do not decide their majors soon after they enroll, or if they change their minds—even soon after enrolling, if the course they need is not available exactly in the semester they need it, or if they make one misstep, these students will need to take more than 60 credits and/or more than four semesters to graduate.
- NYS requires AAS and AOS students to take fewer liberal arts credits than AA and AS students, and AAS and AOS students typically have larger major requirements. Therefore it is not reasonable to expect these students to do the entire 30-credit Common Core. But given that a large proportion of AAS and AOS students ultimately decide to continue on to a baccalaureate degree, wherever possible these students should take Common Core courses for their general education requirements in order to minimize the number of additional credits they will need to do should they decide to continue to a baccalaureate degree.

6-12 Credit College Option

- Transfer students with an associate's degree already have to take 6 out of 60 (10%) of their junior and senior credits as general education.
- Other transfer students already have to take as many as 4 3-credit courses as general education at their new colleges, in addition to whatever they have not done of the Common Core.
- The junior and senior years should be focused on students' major and elective credits.
- The 1999 Board resolution stated that students with an associate's degree should have to take no more than one general education course at their new colleges, although the resolution did not specify the number of credits in that one course. However, the Pathways step function arguably allows colleges to require more general education credits of these students than was the case before Pathways.

continued ➤

History and Rationale for Current Pathways

(continued)

Total of 36-42 Credits for Baccalaureate General Education

- National standard is 1/3 of credits for general education, 1/3 for the major, and 1/3 for electives. One third of CUNY's total baccalaureate credits (120) is 40 credits.
- 42 credits is more than is typical at other universities (see chart on page 3).
- 42 credits already makes it difficult for students to double major or minor (some majors are over 50 credits). Not surprisingly given that the current CUNY campus gen eds are usually more than 42 credits and sometimes exceed 60 credits, there are currently very few CUNY students who graduate with double majors.
- With a 42-credit gen ed, students have only 78 credits for their major, electives, and exploring.
- The larger the gen ed curriculum, the more likely students' completion is to be hurt if they change their major, take the wrong course, take a while to decide their major, or if the right courses aren't available exactly when the students need them.

3 vs. 4 contact hours for English Composition

- Many other universities (probably most) also have 3 contact hours.
- Prior to pathways about half of CUNY campuses had 3 contact hours.
- OIRA analyses show that, all else being equal, students who had 4 contact hours actually did slightly worse on the CPE than students who had 3 contact hours.

3 vs. 4 contact hours (including lab) for science

- A great many universities (probably most) do not require a standard wet lab and more than 3 contact hours for nonSTEM majors.
- Not having an explicit lab is not a problem for gen ed transfer outside of CUNY.
- Excellent active learning experiences can occur in a nonstandard lab 3-contact hour science course.
- Prior to Pathways, not all CUNY campuses required a lab of all students, and not all CUNY campuses have had the capacity to require a physical weekly lab of all students.

3-credit, 3-contact hour courses in Common Core

- Steering Committee was given 30 credits total for Common Core from Board resolution.
- Their original draft structure had 9 courses, 3 of which (English, Math, and Science) had 4 credits and the rest 3 credits.
- After they learned that many English, Math, and Science courses at CUNY and outside of CUNY have 3 credits, and because they wanted more breadth in the Common Core, the Steering Committee's final recommendation had 10 courses, each with 3 credits.

History and Rationale for Current Pathways

(continued)

- The 10th added course was the Scientific World area, so that students would have at least two 3-credit science courses (a total of at least 6 credits of science), and the Steering Committee also added the option of STEM variant courses.
- Following the release of the Steering Committee’s final recommendation (which Chancellor Goldstein accepted), there was much discussion in process within disciplines across CUNY concerning this final recommendation, and there were indications that at least the following disciplines were going to insist that their courses in the Common Core, at all campuses, have 4 contact hours although 3 credits: English, Math, Science, and Foreign Language.
- There is currently no campus that has more contact hours than credits in general education in all of those disciplines.
- Although not specifically addressed by the Steering Committee, this committee’s intent was clearly not for students to spend 4 hours in class for the general education courses in these disciplines.
- The learning outcomes constructed by the Steering Committee included emphasis on communication and analytical skills in all of the Common Core courses, not just those in English, Math, and Science, with the intent of giving students more preparation in these areas than is often the case with current general education curricula, even if some of them have, e.g., 4 credits/ 4 contact hours in English Composition.

continued ➤

General-Education Requirements:

Selected Public Universities and CUNY Prior to Pathways Reform

SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES	CREDITS	% TOTAL CREDITS
University of Mississippi	54	45.0
West Virginia State University	52	43.3
University of Arizona	48	40.0
Penn State	45	37.5
Ohio University	45	37.5
University of Michigan	45	37.5
University of Missouri at St. Louis	45	37.5
University of Oklahoma	43	35.8
University of Maryland	43	35.8
University of North Carolina	42	35.0
University System of Georgia	42	35.0
Temple University	42	35.0
Iowa State University	41	34.2
University of Rhode Island	40	33.3
University of Tennessee	39	32.5
University of New Hampshire	39	32.5
University of Minnesota	38	31.7
University of South Carolina	37	30.8
University of New Mexico	37	30.8
University of Massachusetts	36	30.0
Florida State University	36	30.0
University of Nebraska	36	30.0
University of Idaho	36	30.0
University of Maine	36	30.0
University of Kentucky	30	25.0
Indiana University	29	24.2
Average	41	33.8
CUNY	CREDITS	% TOTAL CREDITS
Baruch-Weissman	63	52.5
School of Professional Studies	63	52.5
Baruch-Zicklin	62	50.0
City College-BS	59	49.2
John Jay College	57	47.5
City College-BA	55	45.8
College of Staten Island-BA	53	44.2
Lehman College	53	44.2
Brooklyn College	51	42.5
York College	51	42.5
Hunter College	49	40.8
Medgar Evers	49	40.8
Queens College	46	38.3
NYCCT	42	35.0
CUNY-BA	39	32.5
College of Staten Island-BS	33	27.5
Average	52	42.9

When double counting is allowed, credits are counted only once.

History and Rationale for Current Pathways

(continued)

- Given that students pay according to the number of credits that they receive, and campuses pay faculty according to the number of contact hours, courses with more contact hours than credits are very expensive.

Common Core Consisting Only of New York State-Defined Liberal Arts Courses

New York State requires a minimum number of liberal arts and sciences credits for each undergraduate degree, and has very specific definitions of what constitutes a liberal arts and sciences course. In order to ensure that every student meets the New York State requirements, only New York State-defined liberal arts and sciences courses can be part of the Common Core.

Why Pathways Will Strengthen the Quality and Value of a CUNY Degree

(created March 2012)

- The design of the Pathways general education curriculum began as do all excellent 21st century general education curricula: with a decision as to what a CUNY graduate should know and be able to do. A committee consisting predominantly of faculty made that decision and then used that vision to construct a series of specific learning outcomes that must be achieved by the general education curriculum. For example, the committee decided that the general education curriculum should “develop [students’] critical abilities to read, write, and use language and other symbol systems effectively and creatively.”
- Specific general education courses are now being designed by faculty to achieve specific, rigorous learning outcomes that have been set by faculty to be consistent with the overall goals of the curriculum.
- All learning standards are being set by faculty and will have multiple layers of faculty review.
- Whether or not courses achieve the set learning outcomes will be carefully assessed and courses will be changed as needed to ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved when the course is taught again.
- Although the total number of credits for a degree will remain the same (usually 120), because the number of general education credits will on most campuses be decreased to be in line with national norms, students will have more opportunities to take advanced courses and do minors and double majors, which can increase students’ future salaries.
- Students will no longer have to repeat courses simply because of having switched campuses, allowing students to take more different courses and thus learn more information.
- Not having to repeat courses simply due to having switched campuses will ensure that all courses taken can be covered by financial aid.
- Students will have more flexibility in which courses they take due to having (on average) more electives, making it easier for them to put together a full-time schedule of classes each semester, thus resulting in better use of available financial aid.
- Students who transfer will not have to wait to get the credits from their former college evaluated for credit at the new college—students will know immediately on transfer how many credits (and what sort of credits) they will have on starting at the new institution. This will enable students to enroll in the courses that they really need from the first semester at the new institution.
- In general, because CUNY will have a common general education framework across the University, advising students regarding which general education courses they need will be less subject to error, so that students will proceed through their undergraduate curricula more efficiently, both in terms of time and money.
- Due to not having to repeat as many courses, not having to wait to have transfer credits

continued ➤

Why Pathways Will Strengthen the Quality and Value of a CUNY Degree

(continued)

evaluated, having more course flexibility, and having clearer course requirements, students will be able to proceed through their degrees more efficiently and quickly, which research has shown is associated with increased student retention and graduation.

- Students will bring their new degrees to the job market more quickly, earning or increasing their incomes sooner.
- The Pathways initiative, and in particular CUNY's new general education framework, has been highly praised by some of the most respected higher education professionals in the nation, including former leaders of Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, and Yale. Before Pathways, the higher education community expressed no opinion regarding CUNY general education. CUNY's Pathways general education curriculum is rapidly becoming known as a model for the rest of the country.

Pathways General Education Requirements at CUNY: Q & A

(created April 2013)

- **Who created, will evaluate, and will modify the Pathways general education courses?**

Every Pathways course has been created by CUNY faculty. Most of the courses were created by CUNY faculty prior to the Pathways initiative, and some were created specifically for Pathways. In addition, Pathways courses are subject to multiple layers of faculty review at the campuses and as part of the CUNY-wide Common Core Course Review Committee. Going forward, faculty will assess the individual courses and modify them accordingly.

- **How much does Pathways general education differ among the colleges?**

Although the basic Pathways framework is the same for all of the colleges (e.g., the eight categories of the Common Core, each with a set of specific learning outcomes), individual colleges have sometimes added learning outcomes to the CUNY-wide ones (e.g., School of Professional Studies), have sometimes set themes for their Common Core courses (e.g., John Jay's justice theme), and in all cases have chosen the specific courses for each of the eight categories. For example, City College allows students to satisfy the English Composition category by taking courses with a disciplinary focus, such as "Writing in the Humanities." In addition, each college with baccalaureate programs has complete freedom to design its College Option (6 to 12 credits) for its baccalaureate students. Some colleges will require students to complete study of languages other than English in the College Option, while others will require courses in Philosophy, History, Science, or Communication.

- **What sort of exposure to science do students get in the Pathways general education framework?**

All students must take at least two courses of three credits each (a total of six credits) in Science (one course in the Life and Physical Sciences category and at least one course in the Scientific World category). In addition, students at most of the colleges have the option of taking their sixth flexible core course in the Scientific World category, for a total of nine credits in science. The learning outcomes for these courses include applying the scientific method to natural phenomena; gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data; and carrying out collaborative investigations. Two colleges, Hunter and Baruch, enable students to link courses in the Life and Physical Sciences area with those in the Scientific World area to create what are, effectively, six-credit science courses with extensive laboratory experience. The College of Staten Island is using its College Option credits to create 4-credit science courses and thus offer a broad range of laboratory science offerings. Within the overall Pathways general education framework, different colleges have made different decisions about science requirements and the types of science courses that students will take. This is another example of how the colleges are able to individualize the Pathways requirements and curriculum. Finally, all colleges have had Pathways science and math courses that have more than three credits and that are required for certain majors approved by the Board of Trustees. Such courses are typically offered for

continued ►

Pathways General Education Requirements at CUNY: Q & A*(continued)*

students in scientific and mathematical fields, but they are open to all students; every CUNY undergraduate may take these courses to satisfy the Common Core, instead of taking the three-credit science and math courses.

- **Will Pathways three-credit science courses transfer outside of CUNY?**

The Pathways science curriculum is entirely consistent with national norms. For example, as with Pathways, a great many universities (such as SUNY, Harvard, St. John's, and Penn State) do not require students majoring in fields outside the sciences to take courses with extensive laboratory components. The similarity of Pathways courses to national norms will facilitate their transfer.

- **How is the Pathways general education framework perceived by other universities?**

These comments from top leaders in American higher education speak for themselves: <http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/academic-news/files/2013/03/PathwaysQuotes.pdf>.

- **Does Pathways change how many courses students have to take?**

The total number of credits that each student is required to take for his or her degree remains the same under Pathways. However, given that Pathways brings the proportion of credits devoted to general education in line with national norms (especially at the baccalaureate level), many students will take a lower proportion of their credits as general education courses. The intent is to provide students with increased access to a higher proportion of their curriculum as elective courses, allowing them to explore new curricular areas or to investigate certain areas in more depth. The size of the Pathways general education framework will also facilitate students completing minors and double majors, which can be of significant advantage to students both in terms of their education and in terms of their future job prospects and earnings.

- **How does Pathways change how much exposure students have to full-time faculty?**

Given that the total number of credits required for degrees is not changing, the total amount of teaching is also the same; overall, there is no reason to anticipate any Pathways-influenced changes in the proportion of courses taught by full-time and part-time faculty at CUNY.

- **Is learning a language other than English (LOTE) required of Pathways students?**

Prior to Pathways, some CUNY colleges (e.g., Hunter) required students to take two years of a language other than English, and other CUNY colleges (e.g., New York City College of Technology) did not. Respecting that diversity, the CUNY-wide Pathways framework does not specifically require each student to take courses in a language other than English. However, a college may choose to add that requirement to its Common Core and/or College Option requirements. For example, the College of Staten Island will require students without proficiency in a LOTE who are pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree to complete instruction in a LOTE in the World Cultures and Global Issues area of the Common Core. City College students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences must complete 9 credits of a LOTE in the College

Pathways General Education Requirements at CUNY: Q & A*(continued)*

Option unless they receive an exemption based on foreign language proficiency. Similarly, Hunter will require students without LOTE proficiency to complete 4 semesters of a LOTE in the College Option.

- **How does the Pathways general education framework support the development of communication skills in students, the skills that employers state are the most desirable for potential employees?**

The CUNY-wide Pathways general education framework learning outcomes specify that every Common Core course must build students' skills in producing well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions. Prior to Pathways, most CUNY colleges emphasized writing skills only in the portion of the general education curriculum that was composed of English Composition courses. Now, these skills are embedded within Pathways courses in widely varying fields, such as in a course in Africana, Puerto Rican and Latino Studies titled "Language and Ethnic Identity," and in a Biology course titled "The Science of Nutrition," both of which involve work on student communication skills.

- **Does the Pathways general education framework provide students with a well-rounded education in the liberal arts?**

The committee (of mostly faculty) that designed the Pathways Common Core framework started its work by defining what CUNY graduates need to know and be able to do in order for these graduates to be successful in both the short and long term. The committee then designed the Common Core framework and its associated required learning outcomes in such a way as to ensure that these goals were met. Moreover, the committee specified that the Common Core could consist only of courses defined as liberal arts courses by the New York State Education Department. New York State requires that a significant proportion of students' coursework consist of such courses; the Pathways Common Core helps to ensure that students take them. Prior to Pathways, the individual colleges' general education curricula not infrequently included courses that are not defined as liberal arts courses by New York State.

- **What are some of the other ways that the Pathways general education framework is benefitting students?**

Pathways has been designed to offer an array of benefits to students as they access and complete a high-quality undergraduate education. For instance, Pathways should simplify academic advising, the curricula of CUNY's associate programs and baccalaureate programs will be better aligned, credits for general education coursework will transfer more easily across the University, transfer students' transcripts will be evaluated more quickly, and students will be more likely to have all of their coursework covered by financial aid.

Pathways Resolution

CUNY Board of Trustees

June 2011

B.I.14 – Resolution on Creating an Efficient Transfer System

Explanation

The City University of New York experiences large student transfer flows among all of its undergraduate colleges. To enhance transfer students' progress toward degree completion, CUNY must insure that students' credits earned from any CUNY college transfer smoothly and efficiently to all other CUNY colleges.

New York State Education Law Section 6201 specifies that CUNY is one university and must have clear transfer paths and curricular alignment across its colleges. A unified General Education Framework for all colleges, including a set number of general education credits required across CUNY, will clarify the general education requirements that students must meet at any CUNY college, and will insure that general education credits will transfer to other CUNY colleges. Students will also benefit from greater clarity about which courses they should take for entry into their majors, no matter at which college the major is offered. Finally, students must be assured that electives they take at any college will transfer, with full credit, to any other college. Together, such policies will increase students' efficiency in progressing towards their degrees by reducing time to degree and credits acquired in excess of what is needed for graduation, saving resources for students themselves and for the larger CUNY community.

Integral to this resolution is CUNY's commitment to the highest academic standards and to the faculty's special responsibility for courses and curriculum. Also integral to this resolution is a commitment to providing colleges with the flexibility to maintain their distinctive identities and traditions.

Now be it

Resolved, that the portion of CUNY's General Education Framework that is common to all CUNY colleges, to be called the "Common Core," will total 30 credits. The other portion of CUNY's General Education Framework, the portion that is specific to each baccalaureate college, to be called the "College Option," will consist of an additional 12 credits.

All CUNY undergraduates will be required to complete the 30-credit Common Core in order to graduate with an A.A., A.S., or baccalaureate degree. All students who satisfactorily complete courses within the Common Core will be certified as having achieved partial or full completion of the Common Core, as appropriate, and that certification will transfer among all CUNY colleges.

continued ►

Pathways Resolution *(continued)*

All CUNY baccalaureate students will be required to complete 12 College-Option general education credits as well in order to graduate (except as specified below for students who transfer from associate-to baccalaureate-degree programs). College-Option general education credits will transfer as such among all CUNY baccalaureate colleges.

In addition, all associate-degree students, including A.A.S. students, who transfer to baccalaureate programs will be required to complete the receiving college's College-Option general education credits as follows:

- 1) Students who transfer with 30 or fewer total credits from any college (including non-CUNY regionally accredited colleges) will be required to earn a maximum of 12 of the receiving college's College-Option general education credits;
- 2) Students who transfer with more than 39 total credits from any college (including non-CUNY regionally accredited colleges) but without an associate degree will be required to earn a maximum of 9 of the receiving college's College-Option general education credits;
- 3) Students who transfer with an associate degree from any college (including non-CUNY regionally accredited colleges) will be required to earn a maximum of 6 of the receiving college's College-Option general education credits.

Thus, in order to receive the A. A. or A. S. degree, students will be required to complete a total of 30 general education credits (the Common Core), and in order to receive the baccalaureate, students will be required to complete a total of 36 to 42 general education credits depending on the students' transfer status. Further, no matter how many CUNY colleges any of these students attend, if a student transfers from one CUNY college to another, all general education course credits of all types will be accepted as general education credits of that type without further evaluation, and be it further

Resolved, that the Chancellor, in consultation with the Council of Presidents, the University Faculty Senate, and the University Student Senate, will convene a Task Force of faculty, students, and academic administrators, with faculty members predominant, and charge it with recommending to the Chancellor a structure for the Common Core by December 1, 2011.

The Task Force will develop the broad disciplinary or interdisciplinary areas constituting the Common Core for the University, as defined by learning outcomes. It will also identify the number of credits to be allocated to each such area. Within these guidelines, the Task Force may make more specific recommendations regarding individual associate-and baccalaureate-degree programs, such as Science,

Pathways Resolution *(continued)*

Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs.

The Task Force will consist of a steering committee, including balanced representation from the college sectors, as well as a working committee, including representatives from all undergraduate colleges and all large-enrollment disciplines. The steering committee will have the authority to establish subcommittees consisting of Task Force members and others in various fields and areas of expertise as needed, and be it further

Resolved, that after the Task Force has advanced its recommendations and the Chancellor has approved the structure of the Common Core, all CUNY undergraduate colleges will specify individual courses for this Core. These courses must meet the approved learning outcomes. Working with the colleges, the University Office of Academic Affairs will facilitate the expeditious review and approval of all courses proposed for the Common Core with the assistance of a CUNY-wide committee, appointed by the Chancellor, and consisting predominantly of faculty, to ensure that all learning outcomes are satisfied.

Any course or disciplinary area that is required of all students and is not specifically required for a student's major must fall within the Common Core or College-Option courses.

The Common Core will apply to all A.A., A.S., and baccalaureate degrees. By New York State Education Department regulations, A.A.S. degrees contain fewer liberal arts credits than do A.A. or A.S. degrees. However, liberal arts requirements for A.A.S. degrees will be drawn from the courses approved for the Common Core such that A.A.S. students will receive partial certification for completion of the Core. If an A.A.S. student transfers to an A.A., A.S., or baccalaureate program, that student will need to complete the remainder of the 30-credit Core.

To insure that students in all degree programs have adequate information to plan their academic paths, colleges will clearly identify courses that are part of the Common Core or are College-Option courses, and all of these courses will be widely publicized by the University, and be it further

Resolved that each college will submit for the approval of the Chancellor by April 1, 2012, its plan for implementation of the General Education Framework, and be it further

Resolved, that clear pathways be created for the largest transfer majors. The Chancellor, in consultation with the Council of Presidents, the University Faculty Senate, and the University Student Senate, will convene relevant disciplinary committees consisting predominantly of faculty. By May 1, 2012, each such disciplinary committee will recommend for approval to the University Office of Academic Affairs no fewer than three and no more than six courses that will be accepted as entry-level courses for beginning

continued ►

Pathways Resolution *(continued)*

the major, or as prerequisites for such courses, by all colleges offering those majors, and by Fall 2013 these courses must be offered and their status as major-entry courses widely publicized at each college offering the major, and be it further

Resolved, that all courses taken for credit at an undergraduate CUNY college be accepted for credit at every other CUNY undergraduate college, regardless of whether a specific equivalency exists at the transfer college, to an extent consistent with grade requirements and residency rules at the transfer colleges, and be it further

Resolved, that students transferring from outside CUNY will have their courses evaluated expeditiously and will receive credits for general education, major, and elective courses if those courses meet the appropriate learning outcomes, and be it further

Resolved, that as an additional component of improving transfer, an appeals mechanism will be established by the Chancellor for undergraduate students who wish to appeal denial or restriction of transfer credit, and be it further

Resolved, that all possible technological assistance be brought to bear on providing the colleges with academic information about their transfer applicants, and on providing students and their advisors with information about the transferability and major-requirement status of courses, and be it further

Resolved, that all of these pathways policies and processes, including the Common Core, be reviewed and evaluated each year for three years beginning in 2013, and every three years thereafter, to modify them as necessary to improve them or to meet changing needs.

PATHWAYS

AHEAD

SELECTED
PATHWAYS
DOCUMENTS