

TO: Dr. Barbara D'Ambrosia
Chair, Faculty Council

FROM: Peter Kvidera (Director, Integrative Core Curriculum) and the Integrative Core Curriculum Committee

RE: Proposed revision to Integrated Courses component of the Integrative Core Curriculum

I. Preamble and Rationale

Much has gone well with the development and implementation of the new, Integrative Core Curriculum. From the curriculum's launch in Fall 2015, we have been able to offer a full slate of foundational courses (writing, oral presentation, and quantitative analysis) and have transitioned the language offerings to meet the new requirements. We have also been successful in offering a broad selection of Issues in Social Justice (ISJ) and Creative & Performing Arts (CAPA) courses for the Jesuit Heritage component of the Core. Also for Jesuit Heritage, the Theology & Religious Studies and Philosophy departments have created the appropriate body of course offerings. For the Integrated Courses component of the curriculum, we are on track in developing, approving, and offering Engaging the Global Community (EGC) courses; and we have created a substantial body of linked courses for Examining Human Experience (EHE) and Exploring the Natural World (ENW).

As we have implemented the new curriculum, however, the Core committee and our faculty colleagues have noted several issues of concern. Ongoing communications with department chairs has made it clear that it will be unrealistic for us to expect we will have the necessary number of EHE (Examining the Human Experience) and ENW (Exploring the Natural World) courses to meet student need in the coming years. Staffing limitations budgetary concerns are some of the most significant impediments to integrated course development. Moreover, in the implementation of the Core, the distribution requirement embedded in the integrated courses—which was present in the original design approved by the faculty (stating that each student take a natural science, social science, and humanities course among their EGC, EHE, and ENW courses)—proved to be confusing and difficult to support; we simply have not been able to offer a wide enough variety of courses for all students to complete this requirement. Finally, we have discovered that the Core curriculum has created impediments on first-year course selection and transferability of courses to JCU.

After listening to faculty comments and reviewing available data, the Core committee has therefore identified the four key challenges that we must address:

1. a shortage of linked course offerings
2. a shortage of offerings to meet distribution requirements
3. a shortage of courses appropriate for the first year
4. limited transferability

In an effort to address the challenges, the Integrative Core Committee proposes a revision to the Integrated Courses component of the Core curriculum. The process by which we came to propose the specific model (detailed below) included many steps: tracking our progress in developing linked courses; considering data on student completion of parts of the Core; discussing the Core with faculty at various points (including chairs meetings and individual meetings with departments); consulting with the Academic Advising office, the Registrar's office, and the Enrollment division; creating possible models to address the challenges we have identified; sharing the models with CAS and Boler department chairs (asking for feedback from academic departments) and the full faculty (at the Special Faculty Meeting on the Core Curriculum, 2/15/17); and, finally, receiving feedback from two faculty meetings (2/15 and the following week, 2/22/17) and a survey sent to all full-time faculty.

In the survey we asked faculty to give preference to one of two proposed models. 102 faculty (out of 198 full-time faculty members) submitted surveys:

- 8 did not respond to any of the survey questions
- 90 responded to the question "Should the committee move forward with developing a formal proposal to revise the integrated course Core category?": 85 voted yes and 5 voted no
- 85 responded to the question "Which model should the Core Committee use to develop the formal proposal?": 8 preferred Model #1 and 74 preferred Model #2.

With Model #2 given the clear preference, the Core committee has focused on that model to propose for our revised Integrated Courses component.

This model for revising the Integrated Courses requirements, in brief, is as follows:

- 1. Have an explicit distribution requirement, asking students to take one introductory class in the Humanities (PL and TRS excluded), Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences.**
- 2. Require one set of linked classes. The goals for these pairs would exclusively be the integration of knowledge across disciplines or domains of knowledge (we would no longer have the content requirement associated with ENW and EHE).**
- 3. Maintain EGC, as currently designed, to allow for global engagement, as well as integration, in the Core.**

This model addresses each of the four challenges indicated above:

1. A shortage of linked course offerings: To date, we have developed and approved 34 linked pairs of courses. To meet the steady-state demand of the present Integrative Core Curriculum, we would need to develop about 62 more for a total of 96. Conversations with chairs and administrators have revealed this to be an unrealistic expectation. This model shrinks the need for linked pairs to 48, a more realistic goal, given current availability of faculty.
2. A shortage of offerings to meet distribution requirements: This model addresses the distribution problem head-on and would more intentionally ensure that all students gain grounding in these academic fields (more so than current Core design) before moving on to more advanced work in their fields, either in other Core courses (linked or EGC) or in their major.

3. A shortage of courses appropriate for the first year: Because this model would introduce more introductory courses into the Core, students would have more course selection for the first year.
4. Limited transferability: Under this model, there would be more opportunities for transferring in Core credit. The distribution classes should have transferable cognates at other schools.

While many faculty members who responded to the survey also commented that this model would best address the four challenges, several respondents raised other important considerations regarding this proposed revision:

Number of Credits: One concern that has been expressed with this model is that it adds 3 credits to the Core: the original design of the Integrated Courses component requires 5 courses (15 credits), while this revised model, with a more intentional focus on distribution courses, requires 6 courses (18 credits). Because the distribution courses will, in many cases, include gateway courses, supporting courses, and electives for majors and minors, the three additional credits will more likely be absorbed into a student's overall academic program than was possible with the original design of the Integrated Courses.

Double-Dipping: Several faculty members have inquired about the possibility of double-dipping within this model, that is allowing the distribution requirements to be satisfied by a course or courses in the linked pair or by the EGC course. The Core committee understands this interest, especially in terms of student experience (completion of degrees) and staffing pressures. We believe, however, that the double-dipping issue impacts the entire Core curriculum and therefore goes beyond the scope of this proposal. We suggest that the issue be addressed at a later time. We will need to consider such factors as an agreed baseline on the number of Core credits students should complete (this can include a comparative analysis, looking again at other university Core curricula, as originally done by the APTF working group), credit burden of majors, potential delays in graduation, and so on. It is possible that work on this issue can begin in the Fall. At this point (for this proposal), we propose that double-dipping within the courses of this Core component not be allowed, and for the following reasons:

- The redesign of this Core component will keep in place what was already possible for many of the integrated courses in the current design: students can use these courses for major/elective credits toward their degree (depending on the policies of individual departments)—so “double-dipping” of Core and major/minor credits will continue to be possible (again, at the discretion of individual departments).
- We argue for the value of keeping separate the foundational grounding in a discipline, which the distribution courses will offer, from the focus on interdisciplinary inquiry, which the linked courses and EGC will offer. While not required in the first year nor considered a pre-requisite to the integrated courses, we imagine that most students will take at least some of their distribution courses during the first year. Most students will then begin taking their integrated courses in their second year. Gaining the disciplinary knowledge first will likely assist students in their integrated courses. Integrated knowledge is a long-term academic learning goal for our students—and not just in the Core's integrated course. Thus, distribution courses will help provide necessary skills for students to meet this goal.

- If we allow a linked or EGC course to count for distribution credit as well, each of these integrated courses will need also to address the learning goals for distribution, in addition to the learning goals for a linked course or an EGC course. Our hope is that we simplify the requirements for the integrated courses, not make them more complicated or burdensome for the instructors. Tracking completion of the requirements will also put an additional burden on advisors.

Writing and QA in linked courses: Currently all integrated courses (EGC, EHE, and ENW) include a writing component, and the ENW courses included a QA component. With the reduction of required linked courses from two pairs to one pair, and with the elimination of subject categories, we must adjust learning goals. We propose that the writing component remain for both courses in the linked pair (as it would remain for EGC), and that we remove the QA requirement from the links.

As it currently stands, QA is required as an emphasis in at least one of the ENW courses—and this is meant to give students additional training in quantitative methods. With the addition of separate distribution requirements, students will likely get the same or perhaps more emphasis on quantitative methods in their natural science or social science course: these methods are often already embedded into the design of these courses. Therefore, we propose taking out of the Core an explicit requirement for QA elsewhere, with the understanding that students will be able to address what the QA experience in ENW provided them elsewhere in the Core. Assessment data will allow us to track student progress in quantitative analysis, and we will be able to determine if, in future years, we need to re-incorporate a second QA experience more directly into a Core course.

Jesuit Heritage transfer policy: While some responding to the survey expressed reservations about the current transfer policy for Jesuit Heritage courses, this also is an issue beyond the scope of the proposal, and can be taken up at a later time. This proposal does address limited transferability of courses by opening up more possibilities for distribution courses to be transferred to JCU for Core credit.

II. The Proposal (in detail):

A. Overview

Both the current Core design for the Integrated Courses and the proposed revision are true to the principles underlying JCU’s Integrative Core Curriculum, specifically the focus on a multidisciplinary approach to real-world issues. According to the original Core document, our new Core

prepares students for the future through integrated coursework that combines more than one content area and requires students to hone critical thinking and problem-solving skills that cross disciplines. We believe that the proposed core prepares students to participate, as leaders, in a world marked by increasing complexity, greater collaboration and interdependency, and intra-professionalism. The proposed core emphasizes different modes of pedagogical delivery, and it prizes the discovery of knowledge via collaboration and multiple perspectives. This core

model is intentional about the role of the student as a producer of knowledge in the classroom, not merely the recipient of information. (3)

To this statement, we add:

To help prepare students for this multi-disciplinary inquiry and to support them in this endeavor, students are also required to take three courses that provide a foundational understanding of three distinct fields of inquiry: one course in the natural sciences, one course in the social sciences, and one course in the humanities.

B. Revised Core Requirements

The entire Integrative Core Curriculum with revised changes:

FOUNDATIONAL COMPETENCIES (9-12 credits)

Written Expression: one or two courses, depending on placement (3-6 cr.)

Oral Expression: one course (3 cr.)

Quantitative Analysis: one course (3 cr.)

LANGUAGE (0-9 credits, depending on placement)

Students must complete the 201 level or equivalent in the language they continue from high school; those who place above this level (201) are exempt from the requirement.

Students must complete a two-course sequence (101-102) if they begin a new language at JCU.

DISTRIBUTION COURSES (9 credits)

Introduction to Humanities: one course (3 cr.)

Introduction to Social Science: one course (3 cr.)

Introduction to Natural Science: one course (3 cr.)

INTEGRATED COURSES (9 credits)

Linked Courses: two courses (6 cr.)

Engaging the Global Community: one course (3 cr.)

JESUIT HERITAGE (16 credits)

Philosophy: two courses (one from each of the following categories)

Knowledge & Reality (3 cr.) AND

Values & Society (3 cr.)

Theology & Religious Studies: two courses [*note that the TRS requirements will change to reflect the TRS proposal now before the faculty, if that proposal is approved*]

TRS 101 (3 cr.) AND

An additional 200- or 300-level TRS course (3 cr.)

Issues in Social Justice: one course (3 cr.)

Creative and Performing Arts: one course (1 or more cr.)

Total credits for Core: 43-55

CORE REQUIREMENTS IN THE MAJOR

Additional writing course
Additional presentation component
Capstone experience

C. Revisions to Core document with revised model:

Distribution Courses: General Rationale (new)

As a liberal arts institution, John Carroll University prizes its dedication to all academic fields. To ensure that our students receive an introduction to all fields, we require them to take one course each in the Natural Sciences, the Social Sciences, and the Humanities.

*A note about the learning goal for distribution: The original core document spelled out a number of objectives for each of the nine Academic Learning Goals (see pgs. 23-25). Under the first goal (integrative knowledge), it listed the objective “**Understand the perspectives of science, social science, and humanities,**” recognizing that some grounding in disciplinary perspectives would be necessary in order to make connections between them. It is this “disciplinary perspectives” element of “integrative knowledge” that is intended by assigning this learning goal to these courses.*

Introduction to Humanities (3 cr.)

one approved course from AH, CMLC/CL/IC, CO, EN, or HS
no pre-requisites
Learning Goal Addressed:

1. Demonstrate an integrative knowledge of the human and natural worlds: understand the perspectives of science

Introduction to Social Science (3 cr.)

one approved course from EC, PO, or SC
no pre-requisites
Learning Goal Addressed:

1. Demonstrate an integrative knowledge of the human and natural worlds: understand the perspectives of social science

Introduction to Natural Science (3 cr.)

one approved course from BL, CH, MT/CS, EP/PH, PS
no pre-requisites
Learning Goal Addressed:

1. Demonstrate an integrative knowledge of the human and natural worlds: understand the perspectives of the humanities

Mode of Delivery:

Each course will be a stand-alone course, most likely an introductory course for the major, though other upper-division courses may also be appropriate.

Expectations:

Each course will introduce students to the foundational skills and methods in the respective discipline.

Integrated Courses: General Rationale (revised)

The major challenges societies have faced have always been complex and are becoming even more so. In order to appreciate these complexities and to work toward just solutions, John Carroll students need the ability to integrate knowledge from more than one perspective or discipline. Thus, part of the responsibility of a liberal arts core curriculum is to assist students in gaining that competency through exposure to interdisciplinary and integrated models of learning. This competency will help them better understand past and present while preparing them for the future. The Core curriculum provides students two opportunities for interdisciplinary and integrated learning: (1) a pair of **linked courses**, each from a different academic department and which examine a shared topic or a shared set of topics from different disciplinary perspectives; and (2) a single course on **Engaging the Global Community**, which is either team-taught or offered as part of a learning community and offers a multi-disciplinary approach to the course subject.

Linked Courses: Rationale

Few critical issues facing us today can be adequately addressed through a single perspective. Equipping our students to examine real-world problems and key intellectual questions through multiple disciplinary lenses is the goal of our linked courses. Two three-credit courses from different departments and disciplinary perspectives will focus on a shared theme or a shared set of topics and ask students to use the methodologies of each discipline to gain a deeper understanding of the shared theme, intellectual question, and/or real-world problem.

Learning Goals Addressed:

1. Demonstrate an integrative knowledge of human and natural worlds
2. Develop habits of critical analysis
3. Communicate skillfully in multiple forms of expression (writing)

Mode of delivery:

Two linked 3-credit courses, each with its own instructor, to be taught as co-requisites in the same semester. Instructors may choose to both be present in each of the classrooms at least part of the time to enrich discussion. Team-teaching is acceptable but not required for this component. Instructors receive credit of one course toward teaching load.

Expectations:

Instructors may design new courses or modify existing courses. There are no disciplinary restrictions for the combination of linked courses, other than the two courses must come from different academic departments. Ideally both of the instructors will be full-time faculty. The instructors involved in each pair of three credit hour courses will interact closely to identify

conceptual connections around a shared theme. These courses should not be an introduction to a discipline but rather an exploration of a particular topic. Instructors will develop syllabi in consultation with each other, in order to intentionally link methods, content, and/or pedagogic delivery (each of the former can be complimentary or deliberately divergent) with the intention to provide students with an interdisciplinary approach and integrative learning experience. Instructors will have ownership over their own courses, yet ongoing discussion between the paired colleagues during the semester will ensure the linkage. Assignments could be course specific, across the two courses, or both. We expect that the majority of these courses will be suitable for non-majors, but more specialized courses at the junior/senior level are also an option.

Prerequisite:

Because writing/writing as a process is emphasized in the linked courses, students must complete their foundational writing requirement before enrolling in the linked courses.

Engaging the Global Community: Rationale

The global interconnectedness of the 21st century requires a curricular component in which students engage with diverse cultural perspectives and develop a sense of global responsibility. Global interdependence brings about new widely-shared meanings, values, and understandings of the natural and social worlds. An emphasis on global learning recognizes that every person occupies simultaneously a range of positions between the local and the global and that changes in one part of the system will result in changes in other parts. Because global issues likewise cross disciplinary and national boundaries, this component is best addressed by an interdisciplinary course that examines issues of global impact.

A focus on the global community in all of its complexities is especially appropriate to Jesuit education. In his “Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today,” delivered in Mexico City in 2010, Father Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., the Superior General of the Jesuits, said: “Now, more than ever, we see that, in all our diversity, we are in fact, a single humanity, facing common challenges and problems. . . The positive realities of globalization bring us, along with this sense of common belonging and responsibility, numerous means of working together if we are creative and courageous enough to use them.”

Learning Goals Addressed:

1. Demonstrate an integrative knowledge of the human and natural worlds
2. Communicate skillfully in multiple forms of expression (writing)
3. Act competently in a global and diverse world

Mode of Delivery:

Courses can either be team-taught or taught as part of a learning community in which faculty from a variety of disciplines share perspectives. In either case, the instructors collaborate on the plan of the course. Faculty must commit to teaching this course three times in four years. Instructors each receive full credit toward load. The target seat count will be 25-30 per section.

Expectations:

Each course will include the perspectives of more than one discipline. There are no disciplinary restrictions.

Prerequisite:

Because writing/writing as a process is emphasized in the linked courses, students must complete their foundational writing requirement before enrolling in the linked courses.

Study Abroad option:

Students who complete a credit-bearing study abroad experience may satisfy their Engaging the Global Community requirement via submission of a reflective essay.

D. Revisions to administrative structure on Core committee: Directors and Subcommittees

To revise the Core document, at each mention of Exploring Natural World (ENW) and Examining Human Experience (EHE) directors and subcommittees, we would replace these with Director/subcommittee for “Linked Courses” (see pgs. 34-38). To oversee the Distribution Courses, we would add to the full Core committee a representative (full-time faculty member) from each of the three areas: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities.

The **director of the linked courses** would be open to any full-time faculty member from any academic department. This will be an elected position. The director would be a voting member of the Integrative Core Curriculum committee. The linked courses subcommittee would include two elected, full-time faculty members, and at least one of them must be from outside the director’s department. The term for the director and subcommittee members will be three years.

The **distribution courses representatives** would be open to any full-time faculty member from the academic departments represented in the distribution courses (see above): one from the natural sciences, one from the social sciences, and one from the humanities. Having each on the full committee ensures that each of these areas has committee representation. Each would be an elected position with a three-year term. Functioning like the other subcommittees, the distribution courses representatives would review Core course applications for this category and participate in assessment activities.

III. Forthcoming Work (to be completed by the end of Spring 2017 semester)

Final decisions on Distribution courses:

Because the distribution requirement of this model is new—and because distribution courses have not yet been subject to specific criteria or assessment procedures (which, we argue, makes this proposal an improvement over the current design)—the Core committee will work with relevant departments to craft application criteria and rubrics that align with the relevant objective of the stated Core learning goal (“Understand the perspectives of science, social science, or humanities”) as it is best understood within those respective fields. The committee’s intention is to design criteria and rubrics so as to fold in existing introductory courses with as little change to those courses as possible. As we did for all new core categories up to this point, the Core committee will approve the developed application criteria and rubrics. In order to assign designations as quickly and efficiently as possible, the application process will follow the model used to approve EN 125, CO 125, languages, philosophy, and theology & religious

studies courses: chairs will submit a list of courses to the Core committee, with the understanding that these courses will include the distribution learning goal in the syllabus and the instructors will participate in the assessment process. Courses will be approved as a group by the entire Core committee. Instructors wishing to create new courses to in the distribution category will complete an application to be reviewed by the newly elected Distribution Courses subcommittee.

IV. Advising Adjustments

If approved, we will make the revised integrated courses component retroactive so that any of our current new Core students (mostly in our freshman and sophomore cohorts) will be able to complete either the original design or the new design. For example, if a student has taken an EGC course and an ENW link, they will have completed the revised requirement for one linked pair and one EGC course. Additionally, for students who have already completed courses in the original integrated categories (EGC, ENW, and EHE), those completed courses also satisfy the distribution requirement for those students. EGC courses from last year and this year were also either a Humanities course or a Social Science course. Students who took an EHE link will be considered to have satisfied the Linked requirement and the Humanities requirement. If there was a Social Science course in their linked pair, then they have also satisfied the Social Science requirement. Students who took an ENW link will have satisfied the Linked requirement and the Natural Science requirement. If the other course in their pair was a Humanities course, then they have satisfied that requirement as well. There are only a few conditions where a student would theoretically have to take more courses under this proposal than under the current core in order to meet the new distribution requirement, but the Core Director, the Registrar, and the Advising office will work to minimize any additional course burdens on students.

V. Projections of Demand

Integrated courses: As we have stated in presentations to the faculty, we anticipate needing 18 pairs of linked courses and 18 sections of EGC courses each semester, at full implantation of the Integrative Core Curriculum (by Fall 2018). We estimate that we would need to develop at least 48 pairs of linked courses and 48 EGC courses so that we have an adequate rotation of courses each academic year. [See the attached power point presentation for more details.]

Distribution courses: If we expect to enroll cohorts of 740 students each year, and if we expect that most of them will take their distribution courses their first year at JCU, we can estimate that we would need approximately 15 sections of “distribution courses” each semester per category:

Natural Science courses: 740 (students) / 2 (semesters) / 25 (approx. number of students/class) = 14.8
Social Science courses: 740 (students) / 2 (semesters) / 25 (approx. number of students/class) = 14.8
Humanities courses: 740 (students) / 2 (semesters) / 25 (approx. number of students/class) = 14.8

Many additional factors exist, of course. For example, we assume that many of our students will transfer in distribution credits for one or more classes through advanced placement or courses taken at another institution. And so it is likely that we won't need as many seats as the calculation above predicts.

Do we have the capacity to offer enough distribution courses/semester? In addressing this question we looked at Fall 2013 and Fall 2014, the last two academic years with only the old (distributive) Core curriculum in place. We selected courses that, if continued to be offered, could possibly meet the distribution requirements. *Note that several courses which have been offered the past to meet a Divisional requirement in the old Core (II, III, or IV), have been revised to meet new Core criteria and may not, therefore, be available as a distribution course. In Humanities, for example, all AH 101 sections have been revised as AH 201 (EGC), and nearly all HS courses have been revised for EGC and ISJ designation.*

Fall 2013:

Total sections for Natural Science courses: 35 sections

Total sections for Socials Science courses: 32 sections

Total sections for Humanities courses: 13 sections

Fall 2014:

Total sections for Natural Science courses: 34 sections

Total sections for Socials Science courses: 31 sections

Total sections for Humanities courses: 7 sections

We understand that several of the instructors who have taught these courses have been and will be called upon to teach linked courses or EGC courses. However, other than Humanities (and we may need to make some adjustments here, regarding what courses are offered only as “distribution” courses), we believe that our departments will have the capacity to offer an adequate number of courses per semester.

Please see the chart for Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 semesters in the Appendix. The chart also includes freshman enrollment in these courses. It is important to keep in mind that enrollment for several of these courses includes upper-division students—many students have waited until later years to complete their divisional requirements. Also, we should keep in mind that while this proposed distribution model may have some similarities with Divisions II, III, and IV of the old Core, the proposed requirement is that each student take just one course in each of these categories, not multiple courses as in the old Core (three for Division II, two for Division III, and three for Division IV).

VI. Appendix

- FAQ (on this proposal to revise the Integrated Courses component of the new Core curriculum) [\[in process; I will submit this subsequently to accompany this proposal\]](#)
- “Distribution” courses offered in Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 semesters (for Distributive Core Curriculum) [\[attached spreadsheet\]](#)
- Power Point Presentation: “Status Report on the Integrative Core Curriculum” [\[attached ppt.\]](#)