



For the sixth year in a row, Portland State University's general education learning curriculum is among the best in the nation according to U.S. News & World Report (USNWR). Portland State is ranked among the top public institutions nationally under the section "Choosing a School: Programs to look for" in four categories: First-year Experience, Senior Capstone, Learning Communities and Service Learning.

University Studies provides students with integrated, connected learning experiences that lay the foundation for lifelong intellectual development. Extending through all four years, the program teaches students how to think critically, communicate effectively, and gain a broad awareness of the human experience to instill a deep sense of responsibility to one's self, one's peers and one's community.

In order to facilitate a connected, coherent curriculum, University Studies courses are designed around four learning goals:

Inquiry and Critical Thinking: Students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula—problem-posing, investigating, conceptualizing—in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners.

Communication: Students will enhance their capacity to communicate in various ways—writing, graphics, numeracy, and other visual and oral means—to collaborate effectively with others in group work, and to be competent in appropriate communication technologies.

The Diversity of Human Experience: Students will enhance their appreciation for and understanding of the rich complexity of the human experience through the study of differences in ethnic and cultural perspectives, class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability.

Ethics and Social Responsibility: Students will expand their understanding of the impact and value of individuals and their choices on society, both intellectually and socially, through group projects and collaboration in learning communities.

Program Overview

Our four-year general education curriculum emphasizes different skills at each program level in order to better help students succeed in their baccalaureate degree:

Freshman Inquiry

A year-long, thematic course (15 credits)

Sophomore Inquiry

Three 4-credit courses selected from 26 different thematic clusters (12 credits)

Upper-Division Clusters

Three 4-credit courses within a single thematic cluster (12 credits)

Senior Capstone (6 credits)

TOTAL of 45 credits

Freshman Inquiry – Exploration

Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ) forms the foundation for the University Studies program. This year-long sequence of courses introduces students to Portland State's general education goals and to the opportunities available in university life. FRINQ courses are interactive and theme-based, with each theme exploring topics and issues using an interdisciplinary approach to show how they can be understood from different perspectives. Faculty members from various disciplines teach courses as a team. Each faculty member is paired with an upper-division student, or peer mentor, who leads the smaller mentor inquiry sessions. Classes include lecture and group dialogue on course content, student-led discussions based on homework assignments, and creative opportunities to challenge and expand thinking.

Sophomore Inquiry – Communication

In Sophomore Inquiry, students continue to build communication skills through class dialogue, individual and group presentations, and writing/research projects. Emphasis on the human experience, inquiry and critical thinking, and ethical and social responsibility is continually integrated into the curriculum. Sophomore Inquiry is an opportunity to explore topics of interest that are different from, yet complementary to, the students' majors.

Transfer Transition – Orientation

Transfer Transition courses are specifically geared toward students transferring to Portland State University from other post-secondary institutions. Each of these courses is designed by an interdisciplinary team of faculty. These faculty are assisted by student peer mentors. The courses orient students to PSU and assist them in improving their communication skills, learning the process of inquiry from the perspectives of several different disciplines, and building a foundation for the effective and efficient application of information technology resources. Courses are fast paced and interactive, providing students with multiple opportunities to practice and become proficient in the four University Studies goals.

Upper-Division Cluster – Individualization

Upper-Division Cluster courses from a variety of disciplines call upon the skills and knowledge students have developed in their lower-division University Studies courses. By this time in their academic career(s), students are expected to be proficient in writing, research, discussion, computer and inquiry skills. In Upper-Division Cluster courses, students gain a rich, in-depth study of their chosen topic. Additionally, in this part of the University Studies program, students can design an individualized program based on the theme they found most interesting in their Sophomore Inquiry courses, and what will best support their overall academic goals.

Senior Capstone – Cooperation

Senior Capstone is the culmination of the University Studies program. Capstone courses are designed to build cooperative learning communities by taking students out of the classroom and into the field. In Capstone courses, students bring together the knowledge, skills, and interests developed to this point through all aspects of their education to work on a community project. Students from a variety of majors and backgrounds work as a team, pooling resources and collaborating with faculty and community leaders to understand and find solutions for issues that are important to them as literate and engaged citizens.

For additional information about the University Studies Program or a complete list of course offerings, you may visit the program website at: www.pdx.edu/unst. Or drop by our program office located in 117 Cramer Hall, 1721 SW Broadway, 503-725-5890.