

# The REAL Education Model

## SUMMARY

**Two areas of foundational competency are required for success in degree programs:**

- Foundational writing focused on composition and mechanics (can cross credit with degree program but not E area fulfillment)
- Foundational math focused on numerical literacy (can cross credit with degree program but not R area fulfillment)

**Students choose degree programs (majors and minors) to fulfill four areas of knowledge and complete general education:**

### The REAL Areas

**Scientific and Quantitative REASONING:** Major or minor includes courses in math, natural science, and/or other related areas. Degree programs fulfilling this area incorporate the tools of mathematics and quantitative reasoning and the methodologies of scientific inquiry.

**Humanistic or Artistic EXPRESSION:** Major or minor includes courses in humanities, fine arts, and other related areas. Degree programs fulfilling this area integrate methods/techniques and areas of inquiry that explore and describe the human experience.

**Cultural or Behavioral ANALYSIS:** Major or minor includes courses in social science, behavioral science, and other related areas. Degree programs fulfilling this area examine individual, social, or cultural factors that influence human behavior and shape reciprocal relationships between people and society.

**Applied LEARNING:** Major or minor includes courses incorporating skills immediately applicable to the workplace; a focus on how academic subjects apply to real world problems and opportunities; and applied courses focus on practice (doing—knowledge in action) within a profession.

Students must complete two writing intensive courses, at least one at the 300 level or higher. These may be completed within or outside of student degree programs.

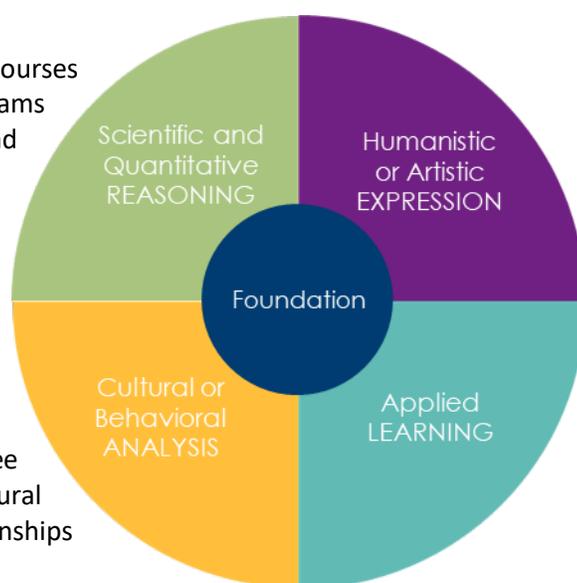
Students must fulfill a personal and professional development area with activities, engagements, and/or coursework.

### **Program requirements:**

Any degree program that fulfills a REAL area must include at least 9 unique credit hours, with at least 3 credit hours at the 300 level or above for the area covered.

All minors that fulfill REAL areas must be a minimum of 15 credit hours.

REAL area general studies minors allow students to fulfill areas with more diverse collections of courses or to change their minds about minors or majors.





## INTRODUCTION

The proposed general education builds on the idea that students can pursue their goals and engage in exploration and learning in many ways and in all departments. This proposal acknowledges the academic strengths of disciplines and privileges no discipline in the pursuit of knowledge. The program proposed in this document recognizes that degree programs build competencies in the areas students need for lifelong learning and success and allows students to cross credit those competencies with general education areas. With this in mind, the team has proposed a model that incorporates general education seamlessly into the entirety of their career at Radford University: The REAL Model. In this model, students meet area requirements through majors and minors. Additional foundational requirements are added to promote academic success.

Traditionally, students take individual courses from isolated course groups that reflect the fundamental learning areas at the beginning of their academic experience. It is the belief of the General Education Principles and Models Team that a more enriching and engaging experience can be achieved when general education requirements are incorporated into and fulfilled by programs of study (plans of majors and minors), not segregated into single courses. Degree programs allow for more significant depth of study and greater contact with departments and faculty. Existing degree programs at Radford University thoroughly cover one or more of the fundamental learning areas, and therefore we can capitalize on the knowledge gained in the student's major(s) and minor(s) to demonstrate their understanding of foundational principles.

## LEARNING AREAS AND COMPETENCIES

We have identified four fundamental learning areas that all students should engage prior to graduation from Radford University: scientific and quantitative **REASONING**, humanistic or artistic **EXPRESSION**, cultural or behavioral **ANALYSIS**, and applied **LEARNING**. Within the proposed model, students pursue a *program of study* (combinations of majors/minors) which simultaneously cover these **REAL** areas to complete general education. All degree programs that claim to cover a **REAL** area must agree to fulfill the assessment plan for that area. Students also complete additional foundational requirements to help ensure academic success within majors and minors.

### Proposed Competencies

The General Education Principles and Models Team proposes the following competencies in accordance with the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) requirements:

- Written communication (required of all degree programs under the Strategic Plan)
- Critical thinking (required of all degree programs under the Strategic Plan)
- Quantitative reasoning (required of all degree programs counting in the **Reasoning** area)
- Scientific reasoning (required of all degree programs counting in the **Reasoning** area)
- Oral communication (required of all degree programs under the Strategic Plan)

Civic engagement is a required SCHEV competency but is not included as part of general education for Radford University. A task force is developing an assessment plan for civic engagement that includes a broad definition with curricular and co-curricular fulfillment options.

## THE REAL MODEL REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for this model are as follows:



1. Students demonstrate competency in foundational writing and mathematics. Students complete:
  - **ONE** foundational writing course taught by the Department of English that includes development of composition and mechanics. Students may use competency assessment, transfer, dual enrollment, or advance placement to complete this requirement (equivalent to ENGL 111 or others deemed appropriate by the Department of English). This course cannot count towards fulfilling the REAL areas.
  - **ONE** foundational mathematics course taught by the Department of Mathematics and Statistics that includes basic numeracy and quantitative literacy. Students may use competency assessment, transfer, dual enrollment, advance placement, or a standardized test score determined by Department of Mathematics and Statistics to complete this requirement (equivalent to MATH 114, 116, 119, or other courses deemed appropriate by the Department of Mathematics and Statistics). This course cannot count towards fulfilling the REAL areas.
2. Students select a *program of study* (combinations of majors/minors) in which all four **REAL** areas are covered. Breadth and depth are important for academic success. As such, students meet the general education requirements by cross-crediting courses with their major/minor programs. Students can complete the areas with traditional/existing majors and minors to develop depth of knowledge in the four **REAL** areas. To allow students to prioritize breadth over depth and make the model more flexible for students and departments, we introduce four new general minors (described below) supported by the Office of **REAL** Education, which is responsible for assessment of these.
3. To expand the effect of the program's focus on depth and increase the success of students generally, the team has proposed two additional required areas. These areas can cross-credit with programs of studies (minors and majors).
  - **TWO** courses designated as writing intensive within their programs of study. At least one of these must be at the 300 level or higher. Writing style and formats will vary greatly. Requirements for the designation should reflect, and not limit, the variety of writing applications. Writing instruction must be integral to the course, as part of the course content and as a significant, recurring activity. Through instruction and disciplinary reading, students learn about writing, including structures and functions. The course description, goals, and outcomes must reflect the significant role that writing plays in the course. Departments/schools can review and propose which courses are writing intensive consistent with definitions, learning goals, and outcomes to be determined in the next phase. No departments are required to offer writing intensive courses, but any department can develop or use an existing course or courses to fulfill this requirement for degree-seeking students or others across campus. Courses must be designated with a (W) in the schedule of classes. Any courses taken for this requirement can cross-credit with majors and minors.
  - **A** personal and professional development and wellness requirement, encompassing multiple areas of competency. Students arrive to campus with existing diverse skills and competencies. This area is designed to be flexible, allowing students to build competencies that will best meet their needs and help prepare them for academic, professional, and personal success on campus and beyond. This requirement may be fulfilled through a range of activities, engagements, and/or three credits of coursework. This requirement may be fulfilled through major or minor requirements. Any courses taken for this requirement can cross-credit with majors and minors.



4. To ensure breadth of knowledge, each student must complete a program of study that includes 30 credit hours of 100-200 level courses approved for inclusion in the REAL education program. Upper-division courses will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for inclusion in the REAL areas. Courses transferred in from the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) may be applied to the 30 credit hour minimum.
5. The number of REAL areas required for those with approved transfer credits may be reduced as long as at least one course for each of the four REAL areas is present in the degree program of study. Students with 60 or more approved transfer credits would need to cover at least one REAL area. Students must have at least one course in any area covered or reduced by approved transfer credit. Coverage of the REAL areas will be determined in consultation with departments and college advising centers.

## SUPPORTING THE REAL MODEL

The following conditions support the implementation of the **REAL** Model at Radford University.

### REAL Area Coverage Requirements

To cover a **REAL** area, a major or minor must agree to:

- Require at least 9 credit hours of coursework, of which 3 or more credits must be at the 300 level or above, within the area(s) fulfilled.
- Adhere to and assess learning goals and outcomes for the **REAL** area(s) covered.

The following conditions must also be met:

- Minors must include a minimum of 15 total credit hours, containing at least 9 credit hours, with 3 credit hours at the 300 level or higher, of coursework that document each **REAL** area intended to fulfill.
- A single major degree program may fulfill no more than three REAL areas for any one student, unless all four REAL areas are fulfilled by accreditation or licensure requirements. A single minor degree program may fulfill no more than two REAL areas.
- No degree program can cover more than two REAL areas using a single prefix.
- Each major and minor must agree to provide clear communication to their degree-seeking students about which areas still require degree programs to satisfy.
- In a student's program of study, courses from degree programs cannot count simultaneously in multiple REAL areas.

### The REAL Studies Minors

To accommodate transfer students, students who change majors, students who are uncertain about their program of study, and students who wish for less depth and more breadth in their program of study, the General Education Principles and Models team recommends the development of four new general studies minors. Each of these general studies minors covers one of the **REAL** areas:



**Minor in Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning.** Any 15 or more credits in math, natural science, and/or other related areas, with at least 3 credits at the 300-400 level. This minor requires at least one course that includes the tools of mathematics and quantitative reasoning and another course that includes the use of methodologies of scientific inquiry. Coursework must include classes with at least two different prefixes.

**Minor in Humanistic and Artistic Expression.** Any 15 or more credits in humanities, fine arts, and/or other related areas, with at least 3 credits at the 300-400 level. Coursework must include classes with at least two different prefixes.

**Minor in Cultural and Behavioral Analysis.** Any 15 or more credits in social science, behavioral science, and/or other related areas; with at least 3 credits at the 300-400 level. Coursework must include classes with at least two different prefixes.

**Minor in Applied Learning.** Any 15 or more credits in courses incorporating skills immediately applicable to the workplace; a focus on how academic subjects apply to real world problems and opportunities; and applied courses focus on practice (doing—knowledge in action) within a profession. At least 3 credit hours must be completed at the 300-400 level. Coursework must include classes with at least two different prefixes.

Note the following about the general studies minors:

- Students cannot double count courses to simultaneously complete both traditional minors and one of the general studies minors. (e.g.: a student cannot automatically receive the Minor in Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning by completing the Minor in Chemistry; the student will need to apply different courses if they wish to receive the Minor in Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning.)
- Students will need to select courses for these minors. Departments will be invited to review and identify appropriate courses and code each with a “R”, “E”, “A”, and/or “L” for inclusion in the course catalog for this purpose.
- Assessment for the general minors will be done by the administrator of the REAL Education program.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Degree Program Review for REAL Area Coverage

Departments will be asked to review their major/minor degree programs and identify which **REAL** area or areas they intend to cover (according to REAL Area Coverage Requirements above and based on the to-be-determined learning goals and outcomes), so that each degree program can be coded with a “R”, “E”, “A”, and/or “L”. Departments will also be asked to review individual courses and code them similarly for students interested in degree areas and/or those who might seek the general studies minors.

No department or school is required to submit degree programs or courses for **REAL** area fulfillment.

All courses fulfilling a **REAL** area within a degree program of study are **NOT** required to be taught by the department/school. However, departments/schools are expected to communicate with other departments about reliance on and inclusion of courses in their degree program plans of study.



## Alignment

To claim coverage over one or more **REAL** area, the department/school completes an alignment proposal. In this proposal, the department/school agrees to document the courses they use for that area, meet the **REAL Area Coverage Requirements** noted above. Programs must also work with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Improvement to describe particulars on how program level assessment of the learning goals and outcomes for degree seeking students is fulfilled. Departments or schools who rely on courses from other departments/school will include formal agreements with these in the proposal for alignment with the REAL program.

This alignment proposal will be reviewed by department and college curriculum committees, and it will move through any other IG processes determined to be required by Faculty Senate.

### **POSSIBLE EXAMPLES:**

Sample **REAL** Majors designations:

<b>BS in Economics</b>	
<b>BS in Computer Science</b>	
<b>BA in History</b>	
<b>BFA in Design</b>	

Major plus minor track(s) to fulfill **REAL**:

<b>BS in Economics</b>	
<b>Minor in English</b>	
<b>Minor in Information Systems</b>	

## Assessment

Assessment occurs at the program level. Each department/school will assess the learning goals and outcomes for the **REAL** areas covered for degree-seeking students (majors and minors). This data can be useful for department/school program review and annual reports, as well as for institutional general education assessment.