

Common Curriculum FAQs

How is a common curriculum different from a core curriculum or a general education curriculum?

A core curriculum, in its strictest form, requires all students to take the exact same set of courses. Some institutions, for example, employ a “Great Books” curriculum. Others require a shared set of basic “101” courses in foundational topics like math, writing, and so on.

A general education curriculum requires students to choose among designated courses in various disciplines such as science, history, literature, etc. One widely used variety of general education curriculum follows a “distribution” model, where students take a certain number of credits in broadly generalized areas—like social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, arts, and so on.

A common curriculum, in contrast, engages students in common themes, skills, methodologies or values that the institution

curriculum and assist the students in exploring connections between academic work and life outside of the university. Examples might include “civic action and reflection,” “innovative thinking,” “ethical reasoning,” and “logical analysis,” among others.

Developing a common curriculum will help to define each of our students—beyond their success in completing a major—as a CU Boulder graduate; will expand a student’s educational environment from navigating a discipline, to exploring a broader community; and will facilitate student self-discovery and enrichment through contact with different ways of learning, knowing, and communicating.

Does this mean our students will all be required to take things like math, science, etc. in a lockstep formation?

No; that is one thing that we have heard both from the work done by the [Academic Futures](#) initiative and in conversations with various departments and faculty. A lockstep curriculum is not indicative of a CU Boulder education and may not be beneficial to our students. The hope is that we as a university community will be able to identify a set of shared themes or skills that we think best exemplify the CU Boulder learning experience. Two different kinds of courses could then fill these requirements: either new courses that specifically teach to these themes or skills, or existing courses that explicitly weave these themes or skills into the syllabus.

It’s possible that a common curriculum would include one or more core courses, if it turns out that such a course would best achieve one of the learning outcomes that we’ve identified as crucial to a CU Boulder undergraduate degree. But we will start by der js œout unetart d Blumm utl toualÃ te

How many classes or credits will this common curriculum be?

We don't know at the moment —that's something that the steering committee will recommend. Generally speaking, common curricula tend to be somewhere between 5–15 courses (15–45 credits on the semester system).

Will my program have to change its curriculum?

The curricula of specific majors, minors, and certificates won't need to change, but the overall requirements of the CU Boulder undergraduate degree will require some changes. Again, this is a common curriculum: all undergraduates, regardless of their

Does the proposed common curriculum require a capstone?

There is no proposed common curriculum at the moment. Capstones have been brought up in several discussions, but only in the general sense of the idea. If you have ideas on how a capstone could be used in a common curriculum, please send comments and ideas to commoncurriculum@colorado.edu.

Will the First-Year Experience be part of the common curriculum?

Several people have brought up the idea of bringing the two together, but there is still much to be reviewed and evaluated about what we already do at the university before that can be decided. Your ideas around the use of a First-Year Experience in a common curriculum would be welcomed at commoncurriculum@colorado.edu.

What about transfer students or students who internally transfer between colleges/majors? How will they be affected?

Just as transfer credits work now, students who wish to transfer credits into the university can potentially have a course applied to common curriculum requirements if it is determined to be a direct equivalent to a course at CU Boulder already tagged as a course or theme in the common curriculum.

A common curriculum will also ease students' transfer between colleges/schools at CU Boulder, assisting them in completing their degrees on time.

How will this all be funded?

The exact funding model for the common curriculum will depend to some extent on its final configuration. However, the university is committed to funding a common curriculum centrally as needed, separate from the budget model for schools and colleges.

What are we hoping to gain from this?

Ultimately, the common curriculum we design should assist students in their personal,

outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements." By not complying with HLC's *Criteria for Accreditation*, the university runs the risk of losing access to federal financial aid (Title IV). Following the HLC findings, [Chancellor DiStefano expressed CU Boulder's commitment](#) to carrying out the Academic Futures recommendation to create and implement a common curriculum. In academic year 2023–24, the university is required to report to HLC on its progress.

How can I submit ideas or feedback?

We would love to hear from you and get your thoughts on the common curriculum planning process, potential topics or content areas for a common curriculum,, or examples from other colleges or universities that you think should be reviewed. All comments or suggestions may be sent to commoncurriculum@colorado.edu.