

# FAQs: Gonzaga's Revised University Core Curriculum (revisions effective under the 2016-17 Catalogue)

## 1. WHAT WAS THE RATIONALE FOR AND PROCESS OF CORE REVISION?

- **The challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, along with national conversations on best practices in higher education, compelled us to re-examine and revise our core curriculum.**

Our previous core was robust and provided students a rigorous liberal education, grounded in Gonzaga's Jesuit, Catholic, and humanistic heritage. However, the challenges and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, along with national conversations on best practices in higher education today, compelled us to re-examine our curriculum.

The revised core fosters the interdisciplinary connections that stimulate creative, courageous, and innovative thinking about the ever more complex challenges and opportunities of our time. At the same time, it continues to inspire students to become women and men with and for others, with a solid spiritual grounding, an appreciation of faith traditions, a foundation in ethics and social justice, and a greater global understanding.

- **In 2012, a leadership-appointed Core Task Force proposed a revised outcomes-based core. The proposal was based on university-wide discussions, the review of other university models, and Gonzaga's Baccalaureate Learning Goals.**

In 2008, Interim-AVP Thayne McCulloh commissioned a core committee, led by professors Patricia Terry and Mike Herzog. In conversation with the university community (e.g., faculty, staff, students, alumni, Trustees, Regents), this committee developed Baccalaureate Learning Goals as an important context from which to develop an outcomes-based core. These goals describe what we intend students' overall learning experience to be, including their experiences in the university core, their majors and the co-curriculum (<http://www.gonzaga.edu/About/Mission/MissionStatement.asp>). Out of the context of the Baccalaureate Learning Goals, the core committee developed several core models that were reviewed by the university community. In May 2012, AVP Killen commissioned a Core Task Force to develop and submit a concrete proposal for a revised core based on these models and the responses to these models that emerged from various discussion groups. The Task Force completed its work over the summer of 2012.

- **The Gonzaga Board of Trustees approved the revised core on December 11, 2015. The revised core will begin Fall 2016.**

Since 2012, faculty have further developed specific core courses, and faculty and professional staff have worked on many of the implementation details to successfully introduce the revised core in Fall 2016. Academic Council, the primary advisory body to the Academic Vice President, voted to approve the revised core on September 28, 2015. Gonzaga's Board of Trustees voted to approve the revised core on December 11, 2015.

## 2. WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE REVISED CORE?

- The revised core constitutes one thread that, along with students' majors and co-curricular activities, contributes to students achieving the Baccalaureate Learning Goals.
- Through the revised core, students will become prepared to:
  1. Apply foundational knowledge of liberal education disciplines to complex problems.
  2. Understand and appreciate multiple perspectives from inherited and global cultures.
  3. Use foundational skills to explore issues and express ideas.
  4. Understand concepts of faith and spirituality as the potential basis for living meaningful, moral, and committed lives.
  5. Recognize the value of and need for social transformation in moving toward a more just world.

The revised core pursues the following objectives, each of which has a specific core learning outcome:

*Objective:* Apply foundational knowledge of the liberal education disciplines to complex problems.

*Core Learning Outcome #1:* Students will be able to use the basic modes of inquiry and expression of the disciplines that represent liberal education.

*Objective:* Understand and appreciate multiple perspectives from inherited and global cultures.

*Core Learning Outcome #2:* Students will be able to demonstrate basic intercultural knowledge and competence.

*Objective:* Use foundational skills to explore issues and express ideas.

*Core Learning Outcome #3:* Students will be able to communicate clearly and persuasively, using ideas and arguments based on evidence, logic, and critical thinking.

*Objective:* Understand concepts of faith and spirituality as the potential basis for living meaningful, moral, and committed lives.

*Core Learning Outcome #4:* Students will be able to identify and reason from concepts of faith and spirituality.

*Objective:* Recognize the value of and need for social transformation in moving toward a more just world.

*Core Learning Outcome #5:* Students will be able to formulate and articulate the need for personal growth and social transformation.

## 2. WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY CHANGES TO THE REVISED CORE?

- **The core is an outcomes-based curriculum.**

Consistent with current best practices in higher education, the revised core is an outcomes-based curriculum, which means that faculty understand the knowledge, skills, and sensibilities students will have developed by the completion of each course and can design meaningful learning experiences that pursue these outcomes. Additionally, faculty are able to engage in authentic assessment, which can contribute to improving student learning in subsequent versions of the course. To realize the revised core as outcomes-based, all courses that support requirements in the revised core are being reworked to meet specific course-level learning outcomes.

- **Students address an overarching question through yearly themes and questions.**

The revised core is structured around one overarching question that is progressively addressed through yearly themes, elaborated with accompanying questions. The themes and questions provide the orienting, foundational structure for a coherent and intentional 4-year academic program that embodies our Catholic, Jesuit, and humanistic heritage.

- **The core expanded from 31 credits to 45 credits to provide all Gonzaga students with a fuller liberal education in one unifying set of requirements.**

- **Requirements include the completion of a First-Year Seminar and a Core Integration Seminar.**

The revised core includes two requirements, completely new to any existing Gonzaga core curriculum: a First-Year Seminar and a Core Integration Seminar. These interdisciplinary courses add cohesiveness to the core experience.

- **Requirements have been changed to expand focus on key areas (Reasoning, Communication and Speech) and to redesign non-majors' science courses.**

Some existing courses will be modified to serve requirements in the revised core, but other courses have been more substantially changed to offer more extensive and relevant educational experiences in key areas (i.e., additional credits in "Reasoning" and "Communication and Speech"; substantial redesign of non-majors' science courses as new "Scientific Inquiry" courses).

- **The core includes both discipline-based and interdisciplinary elements.**

The revised core is anchored in disciplines, communities of expertise to which all faculty belong by virtue of their professional training in their fields, while also encouraging interdisciplinary exchange and connections which stimulate new perspectives and innovation.

- **Students will complete two Religious Studies courses, more credits in Reasoning, and the same sequence of Human Nature and Ethics as in the previous core.**

The requirements include two Religious Studies courses (one on Christianity and Catholic Traditions and the other in World or Comparative Religion) instead of three courses. Some elements of the 100-level scripture course, no longer required in the revised core, are included in the Christianity and Catholic Traditions area, and the core presumes that Religious Studies faculty will teach a significant number of first-year seminars.

The revised core expands credits in Reasoning (PHIL 101) and retains the sequence of Human Nature (PHIL 201) and Ethics (PHIL 301 or RELI 330). Many of the 400-level Philosophy courses, no longer required in the revised core, will be modified as Core Integration Seminars.

- **Students are required to complete course designations in areas of writing, global studies and social justice.**

Aspirations for the revised core in the areas of writing, global studies, and social justice, are supported by course designations in each of these areas. Students will be required to complete three courses designated as writing enriched, two courses designated as global studies, and one course designated as social justice. The first-year Writing course will carry one of the three writing-enriched designations and the third-year World or Comparative Religion course will carry one of the two global-studies designations. Additional core, major, minor, and elective courses will satisfy the remaining designations.

### **3. HOW ARE THE PREVIOUS COLLEGE AND SCHOOL CORES AFFECTED?**

- **The revised university core will replace the previous university core as well as the college/school cores.**

The previous 31-credit university core was complemented by additional core requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences and in several of the professional schools. The 45-credit revised university core will replace the previous university core as well as the college/school cores. The College of Arts and Sciences has adopted a language requirement and the School of Business is retaining a cluster of business school courses as part of common business and common accounting curricula.

### **4. WHEN WILL THE REVISIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY CORE GO INTO EFFECT?**

- **The core revisions will become effective for new students under the 2016-17 catalogue.**

All Gonzaga students, including freshmen and transfer students, entering summer 2016 or later, will complete the new core curriculum.

## **5. BECAUSE THE REVISED CORE REQUIRES MORE CREDITS THAN THE PREVIOUS CORE, HOW WILL STUDENTS IN HIGH-CREDIT PROGRAMS, LIKE ENGINEERING AND NURSING, BE AFFECTED?**

- **All majors have been reviewed and re-aligned with the revised core to ensure that students' time to graduation will not be more than under the previous core and college/school requirements.**

All majors have been reviewed and in some cases adjusted to ensure that students' time to graduation will not be more than under the previous core and college/school requirements. For example, engineering and nursing majors will be able to apply particular courses toward both their major and core requirements. Engineering students will take a freshman course sequence that will satisfy the first-year seminar, the core writing course, and some introductory engineering content. Nursing students will take Health Care Ethics, a major requirement, as their core integration seminar. The revision of College of Arts and Sciences requirements, in combination with the revised core, results in fewer core requirements overall, which will benefit high credit majors within the College.

## **6. HOW WILL RETURNING STUDENTS BE AFFECTED?**

- **Returning students will continue with the previous university core.**

Returning students who entered Gonzaga in a regular degree program under the 2015-16 catalogue or prior catalogues (i.e., prior to summer 2016) will continue to complete the previous university core, which was in place when they entered Gonzaga. We will continue to offer courses that satisfy previous core requirements so that returning students will be able to complete their curriculum.

Depending on their major, returning students who entered under the 2015-16 catalogue may transition to the new university core curriculum, if they and their advisors determine that the new curriculum is beneficial to their academic goals and degree progress. These students will need to complete and obtain signed approval of a formal petition to move into the 2016-17 catalogue. If students elect to transition to the 2016-17 catalogue, they also will have to complete any new or changed degree requirements for their major and College/School.

## **7. WHAT ARE THE OVERALL BENEFITS OF THE CORE REVISION?**

- **The revised core provides a 4-year academic program that advances our Catholic, Jesuit, and humanistic mission into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

The revised core is a 4-year academic program. It is structured around an overarching question, progressively addressed through yearly themes and questions. This structure embodies our Catholic, Jesuit, and humanistic mission, in a way that grounds, extends and enriches each student's major area of study and increases capacities for creative, courageous, and innovative thinking about the challenges and opportunities of our time.

- **It provides a consistent, cohesive, quality liberal educational experience that prepares students for the opportunities and challenges of a rapidly changing global society.**

In addition to the structure provided by the yearly themes and questions, the new First-Year Seminar and the Core Integration Seminar build cohesiveness within the core. As bookends to students' core experience, they expand students' ability to make interdisciplinary connections, to draw on both their major area of study and disciplines to which they were exposed in the core to address the issues of our time, and thereby to appreciate the value of Jesuit, Catholic, humanistic education. The course and faculty development work to support the revised core will increase the consistency and quality of students' educational experience. Expanded credits in Reasoning and in Communication and Speech as well as the Writing-Enriched designation requirement will better foster the development of essential skills. The new designation requirements in Social Justice and Global Studies reinforce our values and recognize the vital need to educate students toward greater intercultural sensitivity and to inspire them to direct their lives toward the common good.

- **In sum, the core revision project is about keeping the dynamic heart of Catholic, Jesuit, and humanistic education alive for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**