**Earning an Undergraduate Degree**

One of the hallmarks of SUNY Empire State College’s undergraduate program is that our students design their own degree program. This exciting and challenging process requires that you and your mentor consider your educational goals and what you have already learned. You have probably acquired knowledge and skills both formally, through college study and training programs, and informally, through work and life experience. SUNY Empire values your knowledge and skill no matter how you learned it. If your learning can be verified as college-level and relevant to your degree program, you may include it. When pursuing an undergraduate degree whether it’s in one of our structured degree programs or a degree in one of our 12 areas of study, you will work with your mentor in an educational planning study or course, through which you will create a plan for your degree.

**College Requirements for Earning a Degree**

**Associate Degree Programs**

For most programs, to earn an associate degree you need 64 credits, with at least 24 credits earned at SUNY Empire State College. You may include up to 40 credits for learning that occurred before you enrolled at SUNY Empire State College.

Our A.A./A.S. in General Studies ([http://catalog.esc.edu/undergraduate/areas-study-degrees-certificates/aa-as-general-studies/](http://catalog.esc.edu/undergraduate/areas-study-degrees-certificates/aa-as-general-studies/)) is an exception, where a student can bring in as many as 52 credits of advanced standing, with 12 credits earned at SUNY Empire.

An Associate in Arts degree requires at least 48 liberal arts and sciences credits and an Associate in Science degree requires at least 32 liberal arts and sciences credits. Advanced-level studies are not required for associate degrees, but you may include them.

To satisfy SUNY General Education Requirements ([https://www.suny.edu/attend/academics/genedreq/](https://www.suny.edu/attend/academics/genedreq/)), all associate degrees include 30 credits across seven of the 10 general education knowledge and skill areas.

**Planning For Transfer Within SUNY**

If you plan to begin at Empire State College and later transfer to another SUNY campus, SUNY Transfer Paths will help you identify core coursework that will prepare you for multiple SUNY campuses. Transfer Paths summarize the common lower division requirements shared by all SUNY campuses for similar majors within most disciplines. Just select the Transfer Path discipline that is closest to your area of study and work with your mentor to plan and follow the core course sequence designed to ensure a seamless transfer. This is especially important for students pursuing an associate degree who wish to transfer to another SUNY campus to complete a bachelor’s degree in one of the Transfer Paths. For full details on the Transfer Paths and guaranteed transfer courses, please go to the SUNY Transfer Paths web page ([http://www.suny.edu/attend/get-started/transfer-students/sunny-transfer-paths/](http://www.suny.edu/attend/get-started/transfer-students/sunny-transfer-paths/)).

**Bachelor’s Degree Programs**

To earn a bachelor’s degree you need a minimum of 124 credits, with at least 31 credits earned at Empire State College.

A Bachelor of Arts degree requires at least 94 liberal arts and sciences credits, a Bachelor of Science degree requires at least 62 liberal arts and sciences credits, and a Bachelor of Professional Studies requires at least 32 liberal arts and sciences credits. All of the bachelor’s degrees require a minimum of 45 advanced-level credits with a minimum of 24 of them in the concentration.

To satisfy SUNY General Education Requirements, all bachelor’s degrees require a minimum of 30 credit hours distributed among at least 7 of the 10 knowledge and skills areas.

The college offers 6 types of degrees based on the minimum criteria outlined below. The minimum G.P.A. requirement to graduate with an undergraduate degree is a 2.0 G.P.A. Nursing students should visit the nursing program page ([http://catalog.esc.edu/undergraduate/areas-study-degrees-certificates/nursing-bsn/](http://catalog.esc.edu/undergraduate/areas-study-degrees-certificates/nursing-bsn/)) for specific requirements.

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<th>Minimum Liberal Arts and Sciences Credits Required</th>
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* Our A.A. and A.S. in General Studies have a minimum of 12 credits earned at SUNY Empire.

**Learning Goals**

(For details, please see the College Learning Goals Policy ([http://www.esc.edu/policies/?search=cid%3D61278](http://www.esc.edu/policies/?search=cid%3D61278)).)

Growing out of SUNY Empire State College’s unique mission, the learning goals outlined below serve as a vital link between the college’s historical mission, the current context of rapid educational change, and the future of our institution in a global society where knowledge and learning remain urgently important. These statements encapsulate the values that we bring to our work with students, and they articulate our hopes for our graduates. We also believe it is our responsibility as educators to enter into collaborative relationships with future students, which requires transparency about our goals and values. Finally, by clearly stating these goals, we will be able to both reflect upon our students’ and our own success through a creative, collaborative and iterative assessment process that extends across multiple institutional levels.

Graduates of SUNY Empire State College will demonstrate competence in the following areas of learning, appropriate to their degree levels. At the graduate level, these goals will be incorporated as appropriate to the program of study.

- **Active Learning** – assess and build upon previous learning and experiences to pursue new learning, independently and in collaboration with others.
- **Breadth and Depth of Knowledge** – cultivate a broad, interdisciplinary understanding in the liberal arts and sciences, as well as expertise in a particular field.
• Social Responsibility – engage in ethical reasoning, and reflect on issues such as democratic citizenship, diversity, social justice and environmental sustainability, both locally and globally.
• Communication – express and receive ideas effectively, in multiple contexts and through multiple strategies.
• Critical Thinking and Problem Solving – evaluate, analyze, synthesize and critique key concepts and experiences, and apply diverse perspectives to find creative solutions to problems concerning human behavior, society and the natural world.
• Quantitative Literacy – read, interpret, use and present quantitative information effectively.
• Information and Digital Media Literacy – critically access, evaluate, understand, create and share information using a range of collaborative technologies to advance learning, as well as personal and professional development.

Educational Planning

Educational planning is the core undergraduate degree requirement at SUNY Empire State College, and students must complete from 4 to 8 college credits in this topic. Through this course, or series of courses, the student creates a degree program proposal that is tailored to her/his own background, goals and learning needs. Within the educational planning course, the primary mentor guides the student through substantive academic work, including reading, research and writing assignments that relate directly to the program design itself and to broader professional and intellectual issues.

General Education Requirements

Breadth of Degree Programs

As a college of arts and sciences, SUNY Empire State College expects students to acquire the qualities of a broadly educated person. The purpose of a college education is to enable students not only to accumulate information, but also to appreciate what is learned in a broad context, relate what is being learned to what is already known, judge what one is told rather than merely accept it, and use what is learned in a practical and intellectual way.

The student’s learning should extend beyond a single, narrow discipline or field. The student should demonstrate an understanding of several diverse perspectives (such as historical, literary, scientific, technological, esthetic, ethical, international, multicultural and gender-based) and be able to apply such perspectives to situations in which they must analyze, explain or solve problems concerning human behavior, society and the natural world.

SUNY General Education Requirements

All students seeking SUNY Empire State College degrees must fulfill the SUNY General Education Requirements. For both associate and bachelor’s degrees, you are required to complete a minimum of 30 credit hours distributed among at least seven of the 10 knowledge and skill areas listed below. You must include both mathematics and basic communication as two of the seven areas. You must select an additional five different content areas from the remaining knowledge and skill areas.

The 10 knowledge and skill areas are: mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, American history, Western civilization, other world civilizations, humanities, the arts, foreign language and basic communication.

You must demonstrate competencies in two areas: critical thinking and information management.

Students may use SUNY Empire State College studies or approved online courses, transfer credit, approved standardized examinations or individualized credit by evaluation toward the SUNY General Education Requirements. Consult your mentor about the options available to you.

Learning Outcomes

1. Knowledge and Skill Areas

   a. Mathematics

   Students will demonstrate the ability to:
   • Interpret and draw inferences from mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables and schematics;
   • Represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally;
   • Employ quantitative methods such as, arithmetic, algebra, geometry or statistics to solve problems;
   • Estimate and check mathematical results for reasonableness; and
   • Recognize the limits of mathematical and statistical methods.

   b. Natural Sciences

   Students will demonstrate:
   • Understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis; and
   • Application of scientific data, concepts and models in one of the natural sciences.

   c. Social Sciences

   Students will demonstrate:
   • Understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis; and
   • Knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.

   d. American History

   Students will demonstrate:
   • Knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society;
   • Knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups; and
   • Understanding of America’s evolving relationship with the rest of the world.
e. Western Civilization

Students will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of Western civilization; and
- Relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.

f. Other World Civilizations

Students will demonstrate:

- Knowledge of either a broad outline of world history; or
- The distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of one non-Western civilization.

g. Humanities

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the general education program.

h. The Arts

Students will demonstrate understanding of at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein.

i. Foreign Language

Students will demonstrate:

- Basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language; and
- Knowledge of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language they are studying.

j. Basic Communication

Students will:

- Produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms;
- Demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts;
- Research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details;
- Develop proficiency in oral discourse; and
- Evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.

2. Competencies

The following two competencies should be infused throughout the general education program:

a. Critical Thinking (Reasoning)

Students will:

- Identify, analyze and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others’ work; and
- Develop well-reasoned arguments.

b. Information Management

Students will:

- Perform the basic operations of personal computer use;
- Understand and use basic research techniques; and
- Locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

Areas of Study and Concentration Guidelines

The areas of study and concentration guidelines identify the knowledge expectations of academic and/or professional fields for the college’s 12 individualized degree programs: The Arts, Community and Human Services, Cultural Studies, Educational Studies, Historical Studies, Human Development, Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Studies, Labor Studies, Public Affairs, Social Science, Business, Management and Economics, and Science, Mathematics and Technology. Students use the guidelines to develop their degrees so that they include both expected knowledge and currency in their field. The guidelines are not names of specific courses; instead, they identify knowledge expectations that are included in multiple courses and in multiple ways.

A student’s degree represents a body of knowledge that has been acquired. If a student chooses to design a degree with a concentration, his or her mentor helps develop a concentration title that accurately represents a focus that fits within the particular area of study.

In planning a degree, the student’s mentor helps interpret the guidelines. When the degree program is submitted for approval it goes through faculty and college-level review processes; the guidelines will be used as the basis for the review of the degree design and concentration. In the degree program rationale, the student explains how studies address the area of study and where necessary, concentration guidelines, as well as the college’s learning goals and degree requirements.

In addition to degrees in the 12 areas of study, SUNY Empire State College also offers a number of structured degree programs. A complete list of both structured and individualized programs, along with their guidelines, can be found in the Undergraduate Programs section of this catalog. The college does not offer undergraduate programs leading to professional licensure or certification.

The Area of Study Guidelines Frameworks

Each area of study guideline is written broadly to represent a body of knowledge expected within that field. The guidelines will help to structure the degree with the student’s goals in mind. Degrees fall into one of five general structures or frameworks:

1. Disciplinary – a program of study guided by the existing framework of a discipline. Degrees designed around this framework are similar in design to programs of study at other colleges.
2. Interdisciplinary – a program of study that simultaneously interrelates two or more disciplines. Degrees designed around this framework draw upon the methods and bodies of knowledge of multiple disciplines to think across boundaries.
3. Problem Oriented – a program of study designed around a problem. Degrees designed around this framework examine a significant issue in depth from multiple perspectives.

4. Professional/Vocational – a program of study that focuses on acquiring knowledge and skills needed for specific career performance and applications. Degrees designed around this framework explore the conceptual foundations of the profession, the role of the professional in that career, and the relations between the profession and society at large.

5. Thematic – a program of study focusing on a particular theme or set of ideas. Degrees designed around this framework trace the development of a theme or idea, or explore various aspects of a theme to examine its cultural and intellectual influence.

Concentration Guidelines
In addition to the broader, general area of study guidelines, several areas of studies have developed concentration guidelines that have specific meaning in the academic and professional worlds. These concentration guidelines also identify knowledge expectations rather than specific courses. Students can address these expectations through multiple studies and in multiple ways.

Many degrees that are designed around a disciplinary or professional/vocational framework use established concentration titles. For example, in the Business, Management and Economics area of study guidelines, there are specific concentration titles for Economics, Finance, Marketing and more. In the Science, Mathematics and Technology area of study guidelines, there are specific concentration titles for Biology, Mathematics, Information Systems, Computer Science and others.

Students can self-design their own concentration title using a disciplinary or professional/vocational framework, as long as the title is clear about the learning represented in the degree. If the degree is designed around an interdisciplinary, problem oriented or thematic framework, the student will be designing his or her own concentration title. Many students decide to develop their own concentration titles, especially when they have significant advanced standing credits. This option provides flexibility in the degree program design. For example, if a student chooses to design a degree in business without including several of the topics listed in one of the concentration guidelines, he or she might select another framework and develop a title that better describes the degree program plan.

Concentrations and General Learning
Individualized degree programs at SUNY Empire State College divide learning into two major categories: concentrations and general learning. Your concentration may be a focused, in-depth study of a discipline (for example, economics, physics, political science); an interrelated study of two or more disciplines; the study of a problem or a theme; or study in preparation for a profession or vocation.

Because it requires serious, focused learning and implies a degree of competence in an area, a bachelor’s degree concentration should contain at least 24 to 41 credits of study. Generally, no more than half of the total number of degree credits should be in the concentration. An associate degree can have a concentration but does not need to.

The college has established guidelines for completing concentrations in each area of study. These guidelines outline general expectations for study in the area, as well as specific expectations for certain concentrations. In addition, students often design concentrations for which no specific guidelines exist. These students research their interests and explain their choices within their degree program rationale.

Professional areas regulated by State Education Law (e.g., engineering) are not included in SUNY Empire State College’s range of concentrations. The area of study guidelines are included in this catalog (see page 25). For detailed information, including concentration guidelines and excluded concentration titles, see the Student Degree Planning Guide.

Degree programs also must contain general learning, a term used to describe learning outside of the area of concentration. General learning may support the concentration, may add breadth to the degree program, or may be in areas that are unrelated to the concentration but are of interest to you.

Credit for Prior College-Level Learning and Advanced Standing
Most degree programs at SUNY Empire State College include some credit for college-level learning acquired outside of the college. This learning is called advanced standing and can come in many forms. The college accepts credit that is appropriate to the degree program and includes it on your SUNY Empire State College transcript. Advanced standing takes the following forms.

Transcript Credit From Regionally Accredited Colleges and Universities
SUNY Empire State College recognizes transfer credit acquired through other regionally accredited colleges and universities. In order for the credit to be directly transferable, the college or university must be regionally accredited or a candidate for accreditation at the time of your attendance. A list of the regional accreditation agencies can be found online at the Student Degree Planning Guide web page (https://www.esc.edu/degree-planning-academic-review/degree-program/student-degree-planning-guide/).

New York State Education Department Recognized Institutions
SUNY Empire State College accepts credit from degree-granting institutions within New York state that have been approved by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to award college-level degrees at the time of attendance. This includes independent and proprietary-sector institutions, such as some New York state business schools.

International Transcripts Requiring Evaluation
SUNY Empire State College accepts college credit earned at other accredited institutions internationally. Transcripts from most international institutions must be evaluated by one of the approved foreign credential evaluation services listed below.

- Academic Evaluation Services, Inc. (AES)
- Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (ECE)
- Educational Perspectives (EP)
- World Education Services (WES)

Standardized Examinations
SUNY Empire State College accepts many types of standardized examinations that have been evaluated for college-level credits. If your results meet the guidelines established by the college for earning credit, you can use those credits toward your degree program plan when:

- You have completed the examination during the specific time period covered by the evaluation and credit recommendation;
• An official score report is received by SUNY Empire State College directly from the testing service.

As with all advanced standing, standardized examination topics should fit into your degree program by strengthening your concentration or adding breadth and depth to your general learning.

SUNY Empire State College accepts the following standardized examinations.

• Advanced Placement examinations (AP)
• Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)
• British A-level examinations
• College Level Examination Program (CLEP)
• DANTES Subject Standardized Test (DSST)
• Excelsior College Examinations (UEXcel Exams)
• Graduate Record Examination (GRE) advanced subject tests
• Modern States Education Alliance - Modern States (https://modernstates.org/)
• New York University foreign language proficiency examinations
• Thomas Edison Credit Examination Program (TECEP)

Before you decide to take an exam, you should speak with your mentor to determine if it is appropriate for your degree.

The American Council on Education (ACE) (http://www.acenet.edu/credit/)

“The ACE National Guide to College Credit for Workforce Training” contains ACE credit recommendations for formal courses or examinations offered by various organizations, from businesses and unions to the government and military. Credit recommendations apply only to training received during the period of time, at the locations and for the length of time listed in the guide.

National College Credit Recommendation Service (National CCRS) (http://www.nationalccrs.org/)

National CCRS evaluates courses, training programs, licenses and/or certificates. Credit recommendations apply only to training received during the period of time, at the locations and for the length of time listed in the directory. You can view their credit recommendations on their website for each organization through their course credit recommendation directory.

Military Training

Many types of military training and occupations have been evaluated for college-level credit through the American Council on Education (ACE). Empire State College accepts credit recommendations for any military training or occupation that has been evaluated by ACE. If you are an active-duty, guard, reserve or veteran service member, the Office of Veteran and Military Education at SUNY Empire State College will assist you with requesting and reviewing military documentation, as well as provide other information and resources. You can reach OVME via email, phone, fax or online at:

Veteran and Military Education (https://www.esc.edu/veteran-military/)
Military.Programs@esc.edu
518-587-2100, ext. 2779 or 800-847-3000, ext. 2779
fax 518-587-5483

SUNY Empire State College Professional Learning Evaluations

SUNY Empire State College evaluates some licenses, certificates and training programs and courses provided by industry, professional organizations, agencies and companies, and recommends college credit that can be used in an SUNY Empire State College degree. A list of the current SUNY Empire State College professional learning evaluations can be found online at the Student Degree Planning Guide web page (https://www.esc.edu/degree-planning-academic-review/degree-program/student-degree-planning-guide/). SUNY Empire State College has some expired evaluations, but if you acquired the learning during the original dates indicated on the credit recommendation you still may use the credits. Your mentor and the Office of Academic Review at your regional administrative office have more detailed information regarding program evaluations and available credits.

Individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA)

SUNY Empire State College is committed to the idea that students should be awarded credit for verifiable college-level learning regardless of where or how it was acquired. Many students have gained knowledge from sources that are not validated through traditional coursework, standardized examinations or evaluated professional learning. This learning can be evaluated through the individualized Prior Learning Assessment process. Individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA) is the process by which students are able to explain and document their college-level learning and be assessed by an expert evaluator. Each year, more than 4,000 SUNY Empire State College students complete the iPLA process. Most students who go through the process find it satisfying, affirming and worth the time and effort. For current information on the fees associated with individualized Prior Learning Assessment, please visit Fees at SUNY Empire State College (https://www.esc.edu/student-accounts/tuition-fees/esc-fees/).

Consult the individualized Prior Learning Assessment (iPLA) Guide or the Student Degree Planning Guide for more detailed information.

Study Time

SUNY Empire State College students are primarily adults, arriving at our locations and programs with full lives that include commitments to family, work, community and personal fulfillment. When you decide to take on the academic rigors of pursuing a degree, it is imperative that you examine your commitments and make adjustments to accommodate your endeavors and thus achieve your academic goals.

In general, you should plan for 10 to 12 or more hours per week of study time for each 4-credit study or course in which you are enrolled, or in simpler terms, at least three hours a week for each credit hour of course study. Study time includes activities such as reading, writing, reflecting and research. Students taking online courses should factor in time for online communications with other students in their courses.

Course Study Modes

SUNY Empire Course Mode Dictionary

Teaching and learning at SUNY Empire uses a vast array of instructional modes in ways that best suit students’ needs and course content. Some instructional modes are location-based and require pre-scheduled in-person meetings, whereas others depend on different tools and technologies. The college community uses a common vocabulary to describe its instructional modes as defined below, including the expectations and requirements for faculty-student engagement.
Earning an Undergraduate Degree

associated with each mode. Students can find current information about any course section in the term guide.

Undergraduate Study Options

**Independent Study:** an instructor-led one-to-one course (student and faculty member) with flexible contact/meetings arranged by the student and faculty member.

**Internship/practicum:** an instructor-led learning experience designed to give a student practical knowledge of their field, e.g. clinical experience.

**Laboratory/Lab:** an instructor-led course, or components of a course, in which all students are “practicing” an application of a scientific, technical, or creative nature.

**Online:** an instructor-led course conducted virtually, using the college’s Learning Management System (LMS). Online courses are offered both synchronously and asynchronously. If an online course includes synchronous meetings, information regarding days and times of those meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes via the term guide (https://banner.esc.edu/StudentRegistrationSsb/ssb/registration/).

**Residency:** an instructor-led course that combines virtual learning or independent study and professional and academic enrichment opportunities with on-site, in-person meetings that occur on one or over several days. Information regarding days and times of scheduled synchronous meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes and is included in the term guide.

Study Group (https://www.esc.edu/degrees-programs/ways-to-study/study-groups/): an instructor-led course that includes regular in-person meetings with students. Information regarding days and times of scheduled meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes and is included in the term guide.

**Virtual Exchange:** an instructor-led educational practice that brings together students from across geographic boundaries in synchronous and asynchronous interactions. Available through but not limited to students in the International Education program.

**Virtual Residency:** an instructor-led course that combines virtual learning or independent study with scheduled virtual synchronous meetings that occur on one or over several days. Information regarding days and times of scheduled synchronous virtual meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes and is included in the term guide.

**Virtual Study Group:** an instructor-led course consisting of a combination of asynchronous activities and scheduled virtual synchronous meetings. Information regarding days and times of scheduled synchronous meetings is shared in advance of the first day of classes and is included in the term guide.

Other Learning Opportunities

**Workshops:** Noncredit workshops are offered regularly to students, particularly in the areas of writing and degree program portfolio development. Check the Workshops Calendar (https://my.esc.edu/academics/AcademicSupport/Pages/default.aspx) (MyESC log-in (https://my.esc.edu/)) to find out about workshops available to you.