How broad should areas be within the Common Core?

One key issue is the breadth of the areas in the Common Core. This determines the degree of college flexibility in submitting courses for areas and the degree of student flexibility in choosing courses. This issue is potentially relevant for at least three major curricular areas, the humanities, fine arts, and performing arts; the natural sciences; and the social and behavioral sciences.

This brief provides an overview of options and outlines current general education requirements in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.

**Options for the 30-credit Common Core**

- Include broad areas for Humanities/Fine Arts and Social/Behavioral Sciences without specification. Colleges could decide whether to include particular requirements (e.g., all students must take fine arts, economics, or psychology); or to allow students to choose from a menu of offerings.
- Include specific areas within the Common Core such as Fine Arts, Philosophy, or Economics, thereby requiring the discipline of all CUNY students.

**Division of Humanities/Fine Arts/Performing Arts requirements within general education**

CUNY senior colleges differ in the extent to which they subdivide the Humanities into different categories for purposes of general education requirements. At Baruch, for example, students must take one course each in the following areas within the Humanities: Fine and Performing Arts, Literature, History, and Philosophy.

Other colleges provide fewer subdivisions or allow students to choose among a wide menu of offerings in the Humanities. At Hunter, students must take 3 credits in an area titled Humanities: Cultures and Ideas: Literature, Philosophy, Classics. They also take 3 credits in Visual and Performing Arts: Media, Arts, Dance, Film, Music, Theatre. At a later stage of general education at Hunter, students take another 3 credits from either Humanities or the Visual and Performing Arts. In each of these areas, students have a wide array of choices.

Nearly all senior colleges require a Fine Arts course. Many also require courses in philosophy and/or literature.

**Division of Natural Sciences requirements within general education**

CUNY colleges do not commonly divide the natural sciences into field-based subdivisions. An exception is Brooklyn which requires students to complete either Biology or Chemistry, and either Physics or Geology. More commonly, they divide science requirements into lab and non-lab components (i.e.,
Hunter, Queens, and City). One possible division would be into Life Sciences and Physical Sciences. Examples of Physical Sciences include Chemistry, Physics, and Earth Sciences; and examples of Life Sciences include Anatomy and Biology.

**Division of Social/Behavioral Sciences requirements within general education**

CUNY senior colleges are less likely to specify particular areas within the social sciences that students must fulfill. More often, students are required to take a course or two courses in the social sciences without further specification of field. Baruch is an exception; it requires courses in economics, psychology, and politics/government. Students at Baruch must also choose either an anthropology or a sociology course.