

LaGuardia Community College
Liberal Arts and Liberal Arts and Sciences Majors
The Introductory Cluster

THE CLUSTER IS A GROUP OF COURSES CONNECTED BY A COMMON THEME. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF CLUSTERS?

DEEPER, MORE CONNECTED LEARNING

- Your teachers have planned the cluster together, including linked activities and assignments
- You will be able to apply ideas and readings from one course to work in other cluster courses
- Each cluster has a team-taught seminar where you reflect on connections among the different courses
- You will work with other students on activities and projects as a community of learners

BETTER RESULTS; BETTER SCHEDULE

- Clusters are designed to meet core requirements in your major
- Students in clusters often earn higher grades than students taking these courses separately
- You will be more likely to finish your first year courses and continue at LaGuardia
- You will have a better schedule in the cluster than when you sign up for classes separately

GENUINE COMMUNITY

- On a commuter campus it's sometimes hard to get to know other students; in the cluster you form a real community with students and teachers
- You learn team and leadership skills by working collaboratively; you participate more directly in creating your own learning
- Class activities include large and small group discussions and projects, field trips to museums, plays and important cultural and historical sites in NYC
- Learning this way is more fun!

MORE DETAILS:

The introductory cluster at LaGuardia is a learning community: the same group of students is enrolled in each of the cluster courses, and the faculty teaching in the cluster have planned linked assignments and readings together. Faculty and students work collaboratively in a friendly, supportive atmosphere and students speak of the cluster as a "small family." Research on learning communities has demonstrated that students have a higher rate of success in

linked, coordinated courses than in courses taken separately. Participating in a cluster offers you both academic and social benefits by creating a genuine community within a commuter college. In many of the clusters, you will also engage in learning beyond the classroom through field trips to museums, plays and neighborhoods important to the cultural history and life of New York City. (See Brief History and Vignettes Link.)

The A.A. and A.S. degree programs' Introductory Cluster is a grouping of four different courses in the liberal arts connected by a common theme. It is designed to introduce you to connections among disciplines and to enable you to develop techniques in thinking, reading, researching and writing. In addition to its emphasis on thinking logically and connecting different disciplines, the cluster asks you to examine personal and cultural values and to reflect on the responsibilities of citizenship in a diverse society.

The cluster is your initial requirement (beyond Basic Skills courses). It is required of all liberal arts and science students enrolled in day classes. Extended day students and those in other areas of the college may, however, enroll in a cluster if they choose to do so. Liberal arts day students automatically take an introductory cluster the semester in which Composition I (ENG 101) is taken.

Two courses, the Research Paper (ENG 103) and English Composition (ENG 101) appear in every cluster along with two other thematically related but different courses. For the research paper assignment, you will draw on themes and issues from the three other 101 level courses in the cluster. The themes common to all the cluster courses will enable you to analyze ideas from a variety of viewpoints. For example, the idea of creativity is important to the writer, the musician and the philosopher. Similarly, actors, writers and philosophers are all interested in the nature of human identity. And scientists, social scientists and philosophers are all concerned, in different ways, about the impact of drugs on society. In order to enhance your understanding of the connections among the different courses in the cluster, one team-taught, one-credit, hour (LIB 110) is a part of each cluster.

The clusters offered at LaGuardia vary each semester. You will generally be offered a choice of four to six clusters. See current offerings in Sign Me Up section of website.