

Modified General Education Proposal

Rationale

The *updated policy for transfer credits* from (Policy 1990-01, amended July 2021) states that:

Students who transfer to a State System institution from a postsecondary institution with CHEA-recognized accreditation with an Associate of Science or an Associate of Arts degree, or having completed general education requirements for a bachelor's degree, an Associate of Science or an Associate of Arts degree, shall have satisfied the general education requirements met at the receiving university.

Exceptions are allowed for

- One signature general education course (up to 3 credits)
- Any prescribed general education course required for the major
- General education overlays satisfied in advanced courses in the major

Under **Policy 1990-06-A Academic Degrees**, students who complete an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree must have at least **30** and **24 credits** of General Education, respectively.

Under this policy, any local General Education policy that requires students to complete 40+ hours of General Education courses is inherently unfair. It is also likely that our new Integrated University will offer A.A. and A.S. degrees, so that a student who completes one of these en route to a B.A. or B.S. will only need to satisfy the 30 or 24 credit Gen Ed requirement.

General Education arose from an important goal – to generate well-rounded citizens. It is always anchored in the traditional liberal arts including the natural and social sciences, mathematics, the arts, and humanities. Typically, there are specific requirements for competencies in writing and mathematics. The vast majority of General Education programs require a broad array of courses within these disciplines, all traditionally housed in a college of Arts and Sciences.

Attempting to fulfill this traditional goal with 24 credits (the minimum of the options here) might be seen as problematic. However, there is a way to salvage a reasonable General Education program without compromising its overall goals. ***The key is to tie General Education to the major.*** In some sense, this is taking advantage of exception #2 without the overhead. Here is one possible solution.

PROPOSED GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Mission Statement: As humans, our greatest challenges are to understand ourselves, others, and the natural world. Our goal is to prepare well-rounded citizens who can begin to address these challenges and learn to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing world.

Program Learning Objectives for the General Education Program

All Students should:

1. have a basic competency in writing and mathematics;
2. be able to make informed choices about their personal lives and health;
3. have some exposure to and understanding of artistic tools and traditions, cultures, and peoples, especially those of non-Western-European origin;
4. have some exposure to and understanding of the natural world and the methods used to study it.

Students majoring in the broadly defined Arts, Humanities, or Social Sciences are already exposed to a wide range of these disciplines including the practice of writing and communication; additional course work here, while useful, is not as critical for becoming well rounded citizens. These students shall complete the following General Education requirements (24 credits):

1. A course in personal health and well-being (broadly defined) (3 credits)
2. A (foundational) mathematics course (3 credits)
3. 12 credits in the natural and digital sciences (including mathematics) from at least 3 different disciplines
4. 6 additional credits in any discipline that survey or focus on non-Western European peoples, cultures, or topics.

Students majoring in the broadly defined Natural, Digital (including Mathematics), and Health Sciences are already exposed to a wide range of these disciplines; additional course work here, while useful, is not as critical for becoming well rounded citizens. These students shall complete the following General Education requirements (24 credits):

1. A course in personal health and well-being (broadly defined) (3 credits)
2. A (foundational) writing course (3 credits)
3. 12 credits in the arts, humanities, and social sciences from at least 3 different disciplines.
4. 6 additional credits in any discipline that survey or focus on non-Western European peoples, cultures or topics.

Students majoring in any other field (e.g. Business, Education, etc.) are exposed to a variety of practical courses, but not necessarily the traditional liberal arts. These students shall complete the following General Education requirements (24 credits):

1. A course in personal health and well-being (broadly defined) (3 credits)
2. A (foundational) writing course (3 credits)
3. 6 credits in the arts, humanities, and social sciences from at least 2 different disciplines.
4. 6 credits in the natural, digital, or health sciences from at least 2 different disciplines.
5. 6 additional credits in any discipline that survey or focus on non-Western European peoples, cultures or topics.

Some caveats and additional thoughts are listed below.

Some Caveats and Additional Thoughts

General Education should be defined by broad Program Learning Objectives, not narrower Student Learning Outcomes (IMHO, these latter should be reserved for specific courses, not programs). *For the most part*, this means that there is NO involvement by a curriculum committee to approve any course for general education.

For example, *any* Chemistry course meets the Program Learning Outcomes of having “some exposure to and understanding of the natural world and the methods used to study it.” To me, it is the height of absurdity to ask a curriculum committee to ensure that Organic Chemistry II meets a science requirement. A 400-level History Seminar should automatically fulfill the goal of “exposure to and understanding of cultures and peoples.”

There are only a few exceptions to this. A Gen Ed curriculum committee *is needed* to determine which courses meet the requirements for:

1. making informed choices about personal lives and health; and
2. ensuring oversight of courses that purport to “survey or focus on non-Western European peoples, cultures or topics.”
3. Additionally, a curriculum committee is needed to decide on unclear cases, such as courses in Interdisciplinary Studies or Honors.

The proposed course requirements cannot be used within the major. With only 24 required credits, there is no need for “double-dipping.”

Students who change majors lose nothing. A chemistry major who changes to history in their sophomore year has likely already met the Gen Ed requirements for their new major.

Transfer courses are easy. Any course that transfers in under a specific discipline counts toward the appropriate General Education goal. I would propose doing away with 195, 196, etc. and limiting ourselves to 199/299/399/499. However, I would suggest keeping 198/298/398/498 for courses that meet the requirement of surveying or focusing on non-Western cultures or topics.

This program is fair to all students – incoming freshmen and transfers with or without degrees – and provides a flexible framework to ensure that General Education produces well rounded citizens.

This program can be implemented very quickly. The responsibilities and workload of the General Education Curriculum Committee are substantially smaller than previously. Most of this program can be implemented immediately. The only delays will be in designating/approving the courses listed in the above exceptions.

This will require additional work on the part of the Registrar to have three different General Education Program requirements; however, these may effectively be treated as new required “minor” programs.