

Provost's Advisory Committee for General Education Oversight (PACGEO)
Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines
Approved by PACGEO 2/28/01 (Rev 3/24/05, 7/14/09)

The Provost's Advisory Committee for General Education Oversight (PACGEO) is charged with assessing the OU general education program and determining if it is serving its intended function, i.e., to ensure that each of our students receives a broad, liberal education, regardless of area of specialization; to advise the Provost of our findings; and to provide the day-to-day support necessary to maintain the official general education course listings. PACGEO is appointed by the Norman campus Senior Vice President and Provost and is composed of faculty and staff from the Norman campus and OUHSC who are involved in teaching or advising students about the general education requirements.

The Requirements

A minimum of 40 credit hours of general education courses is required for graduation. The list of courses approved for general education credit is published in the Class Schedule and is available online at http://www.ou.edu/enrollment/home/classes_offered/general_education.html. Courses must be distributed among the following areas:

I. SYMBOLIC AND ORAL COMMUNICATION- (3-6 courses, 9-22 hours)

- **English Composition** (2 courses, 6 hours).
- **Foreign Language** (2 courses, 6-10 hours). This requirement can be satisfied by successfully completing two semesters of the same foreign language at the college level equivalent to two semesters at OU. It also may be satisfied by successfully completing two years of the same foreign language in high school or by demonstrating an equivalent level of competence on an assessment test. (**Note:** the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of International and Area Studies require students to complete three semesters of college-level foreign language or pass an assessment test. The School of International and Area Studies requirement cannot be met by high school coursework.)
- **Mathematics** (1 course, 3 hours).
- **Other.** Courses in this category are not required, but may be used when additional credit hours are needed to bring the total hours completed to 40. Approved courses in this area include communication, logic and public speaking.

II. NATURAL SCIENCE (2 courses, 7-8 hours)

At least two courses of three or more credit hours each and totaling a minimum of seven credit hours are required. The courses must be from different disciplines, and at least one course must include a laboratory component, denoted by [L] in the list of general education courses. (**Note:** the College of Arts and Sciences requires its students to complete one course in the Biological Sciences and one course in the Physical Sciences.)

III. SOCIAL SCIENCE (2 courses, 6 hours)

One course must be Political Science 1113, "*American Federal Government*" (three hours)

IV. HUMANITIES (4 courses, 12 hours)

- **Understanding Artistic Forms** (1 course, 3 hours)
- **Western Civilization and Culture** (2 courses, 6 hours) One course must be History 1483, "*United States 1492-1865*," or History 1493, "*United States 1865 to Present*." The other course may not be History 1483 or History 1493.

- **Non-Western Culture** (1 course, 3 hours)
- **Note:** the College of Arts and Sciences and School of International and Area Studies require additional upper-division Humanities courses outside the major (2 courses, 6 hours).

V. SENIOR CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE (1 course, 3 hours)

Designed to culminate a student's undergraduate field of study and place it in a larger social, intellectual and professional context, the capstone experience should be an intensive experience in the major or interdisciplinary field at the senior level of performance. The capstone must include an in-depth writing component.

VI. UPPER DIVISION REQUIREMENT

In addition to the Senior Capstone Experience, at least one of the courses (minimum of 3 hours) used to satisfy the general education requirements must be at the upper division level and outside of the student's major.

Policies and Guidelines for General Education Courses

To satisfy general education requirements the content of a course must fall within one of the general subject areas of the general education curriculum and meet the general guidelines for specified for that category of general education course.

I. General Policies

A. Writing Assignments

- 1. Lower-Division Courses (Freshman-Sophomore courses; 1000-2000 level).** For lecture courses, the requirements should include at least several essay questions on exams, or short written exercises, 1-2 short papers, and/or graded journals. For laboratory courses, the requirements should include laboratory reports containing discussion of results, rather than simply a recounting of laboratory results.
- 2. Upper-Division Courses (Junior-Senior courses; 3000+ level).** The requirements should include: at least one medium-length term paper (5 or more pages) or multiple shorter written assignments; and exams with essay questions.

B. Course Content

A general education course should be a rigorous, academic pursuit. The course should focus on critical analyses of the topic(s), rather than mere description. Courses primarily aimed at imparting technical knowledge or skills to students are generally not approved for general education credit.

C. Class Size

There is no limit on class size for lower-division courses. Upper-division courses are limited to a maximum enrollment of 50 students.

D. Faculty

Lower-division courses may be taught by GTAs or adjunct faculty members. Upper-division courses must be taught by regular faculty members.

E. Multi-section Courses

To ensure that all sections of a multi-section general education course meet the guidelines as approved by PACGEO, all of the sections should be taught from common course description.

F. Grading Policy

OU courses approved for general education credit must be letter-graded, unless an exception is granted by PACGEO. A blanket exception is granted to INTL courses that are approved for general education credit but which are not letter-graded.

II. Guidelines for the Characteristics and Content of General Education Courses

All courses in the general education curriculum should be quality, college-level courses. They should broaden student's perspectives by introducing them to the methodologies, concepts and facts of diverse scholarly disciplines. They should provide students with the opportunity to improve their ability to express themselves in written and oral form and to use mathematical analysis when appropriate. They should foster critical analysis and, when appropriate, the development of library research skills. They should instill curiosity about subjects outside a student's major and foster a desire to continue learning. Above all, general education courses should be broadly, not narrowly conceived. They should attempt to relate their course material to the major issues and ideas of their subject area. In addition to these general characteristics, the following guidelines apply to all general education courses:

- Writing should be incorporated into all general education courses. The amount of writing will vary, depending on class size and the level of support for the class. However, each course should include one or more writing components such as essay exams, graded journals, laboratory reports or term papers.
- Ethical, international, minority and gender issues should be addressed in general education courses when appropriate. These topics deserve attention, but the task force believes that they are best treated by integrating them into general education courses at appropriate times rather than by requiring courses, which have them as the major subject.
- Mechanisms should be found for active involvement of students with the subject matter in their courses. Achieving this goal can be difficult in large courses. However, new teaching methods have been developed that enable instructors in large classes to go beyond a simple lecture format.
- Optimally, general education courses should be taught by regular faculty. Graduate teaching assistants should serve as primary lecturers in general education courses only when absolutely necessary. Rather, they should assist faculty by serving as graders, discussion section leaders, and laboratory assistants. In multisection courses, a faculty member should supervise teaching assistants in order to achieve consistency among sections.
- General education courses should be subject to periodic review. In order for standards in general education courses to be maintained, periodic review of the courses is essential.

In addition to these considerations, the following guidelines apply to courses in specific areas of the general education curriculum.

A. Symbolic and Oral Communication

1. English Composition. Two courses in English composition are required. They should be equivalent to English 1113 and 1213 and provide a good foundation in writing.

2. Foreign Language. Courses in this area should give students a level of ability in a language other than English that is equivalent to two years of high school foreign language or two college-level courses in a single language. The courses should provide students with the fundamentals in a foreign language that will prepare them for more advanced study, if necessary or desired.

3. Mathematics. This requirement can be met either with a general course specifically designed for general education or with a more advanced course in mathematics. Courses in this area should give students competence in mathematics, the ability to interpret charts and graphs, understand equations and deal with arguments based on statistics. Courses should be at a level that requires two years of high school algebra, or equivalent, preparation.

4. Other. Other courses can also be appropriate to this core area, but are not listed as a requirement. Courses in communication, public speaking, or logic could be taken to meet the State Regents' requirement of 40 hours of general education courses.

B. Natural Science

Courses in this area should give students an understanding of the importance of natural sciences for appreciating the world in which we live. Courses in botany, general biology, chemistry, geology, meteorology, microbiology, physics, and zoology could all be appropriate in this core area. The courses should give students an understanding of scientific methodology as well as expose them to a body of factual knowledge.

C. Social Science

Courses in this area should give students a better understanding of human behavior and its relationship to social issues. Political Science 1113, *American Government*, is a required course in this core area. A course in anthropology, communication, economics, political science, psychology and sociology could be appropriate as a second course. The courses should give students an understanding of the methodologies of social science as well as expose them to a body of factual knowledge.

D. Humanities

1. Understanding Artistic Forms.

Courses in this area should acquaint students with a major artistic form or forms. Courses in architecture, art history, classical culture, dance, drama, film, literary forms, or music could be appropriate. In addition:

- This treatment should involve to some degree introducing students to the provenance and historical development of the form(s).
- The constitutive conventions of the form(s) should be identified, defined, and analyzed.
- If appropriate, important related forms or sub-genres should be introduced and considered.
- The course should provide students with at least a rudimentary critical perspective on the aesthetic and intellectual dimensions necessary to appreciate the form(s).
- The course should explore the significance of the form(s) for our culture as well as contemplate related ways in which it has enriched our cultural life.
- The course should introduce students to representative masterworks in the form(s).
- The course should demand that students convey their understanding of the form(s) and its treatment in the course primarily through their own writing.

Note: In the case of courses that satisfy the requirement in Western Civilization and Culture and that appear by title to overlap with courses that satisfy the requirement in Appreciation of Artistic Forms, the following distinction will be made: courses meeting the Western Civilization and Culture requirement will extend the study of a given artistic form to an advanced level of understanding and appreciation of the form's cultural and historical context.

2. Western Civilization and Culture

Courses in this area should acquaint students with major ideas and works that have contributed to western culture. Courses in anthropology, architecture, art history, classics, English, geography, history, history of science, modern languages and literatures, philosophy and political science could be appropriate. In addition:

- The course should offer to study a well-defined historical period or subject, or the development of an intellectual or artistic activity that has played a significant role in the shaping of western civilization and culture.

- The course should help students to understand their own time and world.
- The course should demand that students convey their understanding of its focus primarily through their own writing.

3. Non-Western Culture

Non-Western culture courses should broaden students' perspectives so that they can better appreciate the contributions of other peoples and also have a better context in which to understand their own culture. Courses in non-Western culture, global history or culture courses with a significant non-Western component, and courses in Afro-American and Native American culture could be appropriate. In addition:

- The course should focus upon a well-defined area of human culture that derives from sources that are not traditionally associated with the achievements of western civilization and culture, i.e., of European origin and development there and in other continents.
- The course should clearly and methodically introduce students to the non-western nature of its focus and explore ways in which to comprehend the cultural elements that define it as non-western.
- The course should invite students to make meaningful comparative efforts to relate its information to their understanding of their own culture.
- The course should demand that students convey their understanding of its focus primarily through their own writing.

E. Senior Capstone Experience

The senior capstone course should be the culmination of the undergraduate experience and an important part of the general education of all undergraduates. The intent of the capstone experience is to challenge the student to reflect intensively and independently upon what he/she has learned in the major and to place this learning in a broader social, intellectual and professional context, at a senior level of performance. Appropriate capstone experiences could include, but are not limited to: a senior seminar course in the major; an intensive experience in the major such as a senior research or design project; or an interdisciplinary course or SLEP-like seminar that deals with major societal issues in a way that requires students to reflect about what they have learned in their major. In the case of group projects, each student should have a component that is individually produced and identifiable. The capstone experience must include an in depth written product that requires critical thinking and incorporates references to the literature in the field of the student's major. The capstone course must be taken through the University of Oklahoma unless a substitution is approved by the academic department awarding the degree.

Policies and Procedures for Submitting Requests to PACGEO

Only courses approved by PACGEO may be used to satisfy OU's general education requirements. PACGEO meets regularly to examine requests from academic units and academic advisors to allow certain courses to satisfy those requirements. There are four main categories of courses that might satisfy general education requirements: those offered at OU; those transferred from another institution that are equivalent to an OU course; those transferred from another institution that are not equivalent to an OU course; and those taken at an institution in another country as part of an OU-sponsored exchange program. Each category is handled differently, as described in the following sections.

I. OU Courses

- A. Policy** – Courses offered at OU will satisfy general education requirements only if so requested by the academic unit offering the course and only after the request is approved by PACGEO.
- B. Procedure** – Requests are submitted to PACGEO by an academic unit or a course-approving body in one of the colleges. Approval or denial by PACGEO is noted in the database describing all OU courses. A list of OU courses approved for general education will be published in the class schedule. Courses denied by PACGEO cannot appear in the listing and will not satisfy general education requirements. Thus, PACGEO will need to make only one such determination for each OU course, unless the academic unit offering the course submits a subsequent (modified) request. An academic unit may also request that a course be removed from the general education list. Removals tend to confuse the advisement process for both students and advisors, and thus should not be approved without considerable prior thought.

II. Equated Transfer Courses

- A. Policy** – Many courses transferred from other institutions are equated to OU courses. This means that an academic unit at OU, or the Office of Admissions, has examined the transfer course and determined that its goals and content significantly overlap with those of a specific course offered at OU. An equated transfer course carries all credits normally awarded for the OU course to which it has been equated, including satisfying general education requirements. If the OU course is accepted for general education credit, then the transfer course is similarly accepted; conversely, if the OU course does not satisfy a general education requirement, the transfer course also will not satisfy a general education requirement. However, the transfer course may be reviewed by PACGEO to determine whether or not it meets the intent of the general education requirement.
- B. Procedure** – Equating transfer courses to OU courses requires a careful examination of the content of the courses and is undertaken by the academic unit offering the OU course or the Office of Admissions. PACGEO will rarely, if ever, be involved in this procedure.

III. Unequated Transfer Courses

- A. Policy** – Transfer courses that are not equated to OU courses may still satisfy general education requirements. To facilitate the advising of new transfer students, academic advisors at OU are authorized to certify unequated transfer courses as satisfying general education requirements for an individual student. PACGEO will subsequently review each course so

certified to determine whether or not it will be added to the list of transfer courses that satisfy a general education requirement for any student.

- B. Procedure** – When new transfer students discuss their transfer courses with advisors at OU, the advisor may look at the content of an unequated transfer course and make a judgment as to whether or not it satisfies a general education requirement for the student. If so, the advisor may link the course to the general education requirement on the student's A/DA, or simply waive the general education requirement and note how it was satisfied. The advisor must then complete and submit to PACGEO the "General Education Evaluation Form for an Unequated Transfer Course." The documentation used by the advisor as the basis for the decision must be attached to the request. If the committee concurs with the advisor's decision, then that course will be added to the transfer course database and will count as a general education course for all future transfer students who transfer credit for it. If the committee disagrees with the advisors' recommendation, the course will be marked as "rejected" under the general education field on the transfer course database, and the course will not satisfy the general education requirement for future students. *However, the course continues to satisfy the general education requirement for the original student.* If an advisor is uncertain whether or not a course should count for general education credit, he/she may forward it to PACGEO with no recommendation.

IV. Unequated OU-Sponsored Study Abroad Course

- A. Policy** – OU students participating in an OU-sponsored international exchange program typically enroll in a block of credit hours under the INTL-designation. Course work taken under the INTL designator that equates to an OU course carrying general education designation will automatically satisfy the same requirement as the OU course. Course work taken under the INTL designator that does not equate to an OU course may be submitted to PACGEO for review to determine what, if any, general education requirement the coursework satisfies.
- B. Procedure** – To have study abroad course work evaluated for general education credit, students must present documentation that the international course work is equivalent to an OU general education course or meets the intent of a general education requirement.

It is preferable that the issue of general education credit for an INTL course be addressed before leaving to study abroad. However, should the necessary documentation not be available, the student may seek approval after returning from abroad. The student should discuss this issue with an academic advisor during the pre-departure advising session.

If a student wants the INTL course to be equated to a specific OU general education course, he/she should have it equated by an OU faculty member in the subject area of the course, or by the Office of Admissions.

If the INTL course has no OU equivalent, the student may petition PACGEO either before departing or after returning from abroad. The student should complete the General Education Evaluation Form for an Unequated OU Study Abroad Course and submit it to his/her college academic advisor along with appropriate documentation that the course satisfies an OU general education requirement. Documentation must indicate that both the *content* of the course and the *writing component* meets the intent of the OU general education requirement. Documentation of content could include a course syllabus, the textbook, a copy of the Table of Contents from the textbook, etc. Documentation of the

writing component could include the syllabus, copies of exams, papers, etc. The more comprehensive the documentation, the more likely it is that the course will be approved for general education credit.

Requests for Exceptions to General Education Policies

Requests for exceptions to the general education requirements must be submitted to PACGEO for approval.

All requests from students must be initiated by an academic adviser in the dean's office of the student's college. The adviser should forward the student's petition and all supporting documentation to the chair of PACGEO. The adviser should also indicate in writing the recommendation of the dean (or the dean's designee) of the college in which the student is enrolled. Requests received directly from students will be returned to the college advising office for the required documentation and recommendation.

Requests from an academic unit for an exception to policy should be submitted directly to the chair of PACGEO.

General PACGEO Procedures

The method by which requests to PACGEO are reviewed depends on the nature of the request:

- Requests for OU courses to be designated for general education are reviewed by individual members of PACGEO with expertise in the area of the course. In some cases, the request may be discussed and voted on by the entire committee.
- Requests for general education credit for unequated transfer courses and unequated study abroad courses are reviewed by the chair of PACGEO. Courses that do not fit into any member's general area of specialization will usually be reviewed by the committee as a whole.
- Requests for exceptions to general education policies are reviewed by the chair of PACGEO, who may act on the request, refer it to a member of the committee, or refer it to the committee as a whole.

Minutes of PACGEO meetings provide a brief summary of actions taken on transfer and OU courses reviewed. The minutes generally indicate only approval or denial for each course, although occasionally some information pertinent to a denial is included.