

# **Provost's Advisory Committee for General Education Oversight (PACGEO) General Education Course Development Guidelines**

## **A. Oversight**

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.

## **B. General Requirements**

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.

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.

### **1. Writing Assignments**

Writing must 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 must include writing components appropriate to the type and level of the class. See the course proposal form for each general education category for specific details. Improving writing skills is an important goal of general education. All general education courses are expected to include a writing component consistent with the parameters of the discipline.

### **2. 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.

### **3. 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.

#### **4. Faculty**

Ideally, general education courses should be taught by regular faculty\*. In multi-section courses, a faculty member should supervise teaching assistants in order to achieve consistency among sections. Lower-division courses may be taught by GTAs or adjunct faculty members. Upper division must be taught by regular faculty\*. Exceptions must be proposed directly to PACGEO for approval.

\* Regular faculty is defined as: all faculty members with regular appointments including tenure-track, tenured, and consecutive term/renewable term appointments at the ranks of assistant professor, associate professor, and professor.

#### **5. 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.

#### **6. 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.

#### **7. Active Learning**

Just as we expect with all courses, mechanisms should be found for active involvement of students with the subject matter in their courses.

#### **8. Review and Oversight**

General education courses are subject to periodic review. In order for standards in general education courses to be maintained, periodic review of the courses is essential.

## C. Course Specific Requirements

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

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

- **English Composition** (2 courses, 6 hours).

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

- **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.)

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.

- **Mathematics** (1 course, 3 hours).

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.

- **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.

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.

**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.)

Courses in this area should give students an understanding of the importance of natural sciences for appreciating the world in which we live. They should also give students an understanding of scientific methodology as well as expose them to a body of foundational and factual knowledge.

**III. SOCIAL SCIENCE (2 courses, 6 hours)** One course must be Political Science 1113, “*American Federal Government*” (three hours)

Courses in this area should give students a better understanding of human behavior and its relationship to social issues. The courses should give students an understanding of the methodologies of social science as well as expose them to a body of foundational and factual knowledge.

**IV. HUMANITIES (4 courses, 12 hours)**

- **Understanding Artistic Forms** (1 course, 3 hours)

Courses in this area should acquaint students with a major artistic form or forms. The origins, the historical development, and representative works of the form(s) should be introduced. The basic elements and principles of the form(s) should be identified, defined, and analyzed. A critical perspective on and the significance of the artistic form(s) for our cultural context should be explored.

**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 Understanding 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.

- **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.

Courses in this area should acquaint students with major ideas and works that have contributed to western culture, which has been defined as primarily derived from Judeo Christian, Greco Roman, and European cultures. 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.

- **Non-Western Culture** (1 course, 3 hours)

Non-Western culture courses are humanities course that 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 must provide a primary focus on non-Western culture. 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 explicitly 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.

- **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.

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 OSLEP-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.