

### III. STANDARDS FOR AWARDING BACHELOR'S DEGREES

#### A. DEFINITIONS AND GUIDELINES

The bachelor's degree is an academic title conferred on an individual, usually by an institution of higher education, in recognition of the successful completion of a three- or four-year course of study. The title is typically awarded upon recommendation by the faculty of the college or university conferring the degree.

The baccalaureate program is comprised of three separate parts: general education, specialized education, and elective elements. In a typical program, the three parts will be approximately equal in length, which means that about one-third of the student credit hours required for the degree will be devoted to each of the three parts or segments. In a traditional bachelor's degree program, the part devoted to general education will predominate, whereas in a professional program, specialized courses will consume a larger share of the total hours required for the degree.

##### 1.General Education Core

The completion of a basic general education core of a minimum of 40 semester credit hours shall include the following (Note: this 37 basic general education core is also required for the Arts and Science Associate degrees):

- a. English Composition ..... 6 hours
- b. U.S. History and U.S. Government (see Section IV)..... 6 hours
- c. Science 6 hours  
(One course must be a laboratory science)
- d. Humanities ..... 6 hours  
(Chosen from nonperformance courses defined as  
humanities by the institution granting the degree)
- e. Mathematics ..... 3 hours
- f. At least one course from the following areas..... 3 hours  
Psychology, Social Sciences, Foreign Languages,  
Fine Arts (Art, Music, Dramatics)
- g. Additional liberal arts and sciences courses as needed to meet the minimum total of  
40 credit hours required in this policy.

A discussion of the framework for the development of the general education curriculum appears in Section III of this policy.

Credits earned consistent with the Oklahoma State Regents' policy, *Standards of Education Relating to Credit for Extracurricular Learning*, may be used to satisfy given requirements.

## **2.Types of Degrees**

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education recognize three types of baccalaureate degrees: the Bachelor of Arts degree is awarded for successful completion of a program of study that is primarily liberal arts and sciences; the Bachelor of Science degree is awarded for successful completion of a program of study designed to lead to graduate study or to entry into a particular profession; the Bachelor of (Specialty) degree is awarded for successful completion of a program of study of a conservatory or studio nature, or that is designed primarily for entry into a professional or occupational field. It is conceivable that an institution might offer more than one degree in a discipline.

Undergraduate degrees are to be distinguished as follows by the minimum amount of liberal arts and sciences required for each degree type described below.

- a.At least 80 semester credit hours (or the equivalent) of the course work for the Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree shall be in the liberal arts and sciences;
- b.At least 55 semester credit hours (or the equivalent) of the course work for the Bachelor of Science (BS) shall be in the liberal arts and sciences;
- c.At least 40 semester credit hours (or the equivalent) of the course work for the Bachelor of Applied Science, Bachelor of Applied Arts, Bachelor of Technology, and Bachelor of (Specialty) shall be in the liberal arts and sciences. The Bachelor of (Specialty) is restricted to a small number of fields in which traditional national practice or demands of the field or discipline require that the degree title include the name of the profession or discipline.

## **3.Liberal Arts and Sciences**

The liberal arts and sciences are defined as those traditional fields of study in the humanities; social and behavioral sciences; communication, natural and life sciences; mathematics; and the history, literature and theory of the fine arts (music, art, drama, dance). Courses in these fields whose primary purpose is directed toward specific occupational or professional objectives, or courses in the arts which rely substantially on studio or performance work are not considered to be liberal arts and sciences for the purpose of this policy. Courses required for the General Education Program are not necessarily synonymous or mutually exclusive with the liberal arts and sciences.

An institution may determine the content and distribution of courses within the bounds of these guidelines and may adopt such additional requirements (e.g., foreign language competence for the B.A.) . Such additional degree requirements must be approved by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and be published in the official catalog of the institution.

## **B. A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION**

The following section seeks to identify the meaning and parameters of general education within The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. In accomplishing this goal, concern is given to: (1) General education through common goals and purposes; (2) A recognition of the desirability of developing general education programs which fit the individual needs of the several institutions; and (3) An awareness of the need for

articulating the relationship and scope of general education in terms of transfer from the two-year colleges to the senior colleges and universities.

General education in the college curriculum emphasizes the learning of *facts, values, understandings, skills, attitudes, and appreciations* believed to be meaningful concerns that are common to all students by virtue of their involvement as human beings living in the latter half of the current century and making preparation to enter the twenty-first century.

The general education program therefore speaks to a variety of academic experiences depending on the background of the individual student and the philosophical stance of the particular college or university. While this document will suggest relatively broad disciplines within the categories identified as areas of *common learning* incorporated in a general education program, it will leave to the individual institutions responsibility for the designation of particular courses in the institution's general education program.

Ideally, general education should extend throughout the four years of students' baccalaureate programs. While this document stops short of prescribing an upper-division requirement in general education, institutions are encouraged to recognize the value of providing some type of upper-division general education experience during the final two years of the bachelor's degree program. It is also imperative that all institutions provide a means for "credit by examination" and/or a mechanism for "testing out of" established general education courses when individuals already have attained a "college-level" grasp of selected subject matter.

While liberal arts subject matter is the major vehicle for implementing the general education program, general education today may involve disciplines not traditionally identified with the liberal arts. In the latter half of the twentieth century, new and unique disciplines have emerged which, in terms of common experiences and usages, are vital in the academic development of a large number of college students. Computer Science is an example of such a discipline. The computer age has dawned, and The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education recognizes the need to provide knowledge of computer science, not only as a field of specialization, but also within the framework of general education.

General education, with its foundation in the liberal arts and the implementation of new disciplines not traditionally associated with liberal studies, seeks to provide the college student of today with an education (beyond the foundation stage attained in elementary and secondary school) which moves the individual beyond a narrow self-orientation into a position of grasping educational knowledge and experience that is significant for the individual to function adequately in his or her relationship to the larger community. Therefore, general education so conceived, should include the following elements within the four years which comprise the bachelor's degree:

### **1. Basic Objectives of General Education**

- a. To foster an appreciation of human kind as creatures of worth, capable of rational thought and action;
- b. To develop responsible citizens for membership in the human family in a dynamic global society;
- c. To facilitate understanding and use of symbols for communicating effectively in society.

- d. To explore sensitively those moral and ethical concerns that are common to human kind;
- e. To foster understanding of human kind in relationship to nature;
- f. To expose students to those aesthetic aspects of life toward the end that they may appreciate and utilize beauty in its multiform expressions;
- g. To demonstrate the interdependence of human kind through a study of production and consumption functions in a global society;
- h. To help students develop and maintain good mental and physical health habits and life-styles.<sup>3</sup>

The end result of general education with its emphasis on the need for both *common and liberal learning* should increase the capacity of students to live meaningfully in relation to others. The emphasis on *rational thought* should help the student synthesize particular knowledge and develop the capacity to *think and behave in an independent, responsible, and productive manner*.

## 2. The General Education Core

The objectives of general education may be realized through the following components:

### a. Communication and Symbols

The goals of general education include a recognition that human beings are cognitive creatures separated from other forms of life primarily by an intricate and sophisticated use of symbols. The symbols of the alphabet ordered into meaningful expressions form the basis for communication through reading and writing. The ability to produce and audit sounds which have a referent in experience forms the basis for communicating through speaking and listening. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: English Language Studies, Foreign Language Studies, and Speech-Communication Studies.

A second dimension of communication through symbols is in the quantitative domain with its use of numbers. Numbers provide a universally accepted system of symbols. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: Mathematics, Logic, Statistics and Computer Science.

### b. Social, Political, and Economic Institutions

The goals of general education include a recognition that human beings are participants in and creators of social, political, and economic institutions. Within the framework of selected institutions human kind is nourished in a variety of

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<sup>3</sup> See Section III C. Requirements and Standards for restrictions on the counting of physical education activity courses for degree requirements.

need fulfillments. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: Sociology, Political Science, Economics, and Philosophy.

Modern economic theorists have developed disciplines that provide knowledge in the means and ends of producing and consuming. Intelligent participation by citizens in a democratic society is predicated upon a basic understanding of economic principles. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: Economics and Consumer Education.

c. Understanding of Nature and Human Kind's Place Therein

The goals of general education include an understanding and appreciation of both the facts and methodology of science. In this area, students will develop knowledge in both pure and applied science. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: Natural and Physical Science as well as Experimental Psychology.

The ability to participate in the world of nature is conditioned on the development and maintenance of health-related activities that are lifelong. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: Health and Physical Education,<sup>4</sup> Nutrition and Developmental Psychology.

d. Understanding of Human Heritage and Culture

The goals of general education include an inquiry into the roots of civilization with its ebb and flow, progress and regression, war and peace. It will include, besides facts, the seminal ideas and events that have shaped the sweep of history. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: History, Political Science, Philosophy, Anthropology, Archeology, and Cultural Geography.

To understand a culture one must move beyond simple facts into the interrelationships between ideas and culture. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: Language (modern and ancient), Humanities, History, and Cultural Studies.

An understanding and appreciation of the arts provide aesthetic awareness. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: Music, Art, Drama, and Dance.

e. Values and Beliefs

Within the framework of the goals of general education is the assumption that students learn the distinction between "facts and beliefs." Therefore, a study of how values are formed, transmitted and revised is desirable. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: Philosophy, Literature, Music and Art History, History and Philosophy of Science, Humanities, Sociology and World Religions.

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<sup>4</sup> See Section III C. Requirements and Standards for restrictions on the counting of physical education activity courses for degree requirements.

Beyond an understanding of the origin and meaning of values, it is helpful for students to identify the source of their own beliefs and to engage in an analysis of the basis of their personal moral and ethical choices. Some disciplines which might be helpful in furthering this objective would include: Psychology, Philosophy, and Ethics.

All of the above disciplines are but examples of those which might be utilized to foster the objectives of general education within each of the Sections A through E and are not intended to be inclusive of all the disciplines which institutions might wish to utilize in carrying out their individual general education programs.

General education is a life-long process. The general education program at the college level is built on at least twelve years of educational experience of the student in elementary and secondary school. It is hoped that the advanced experiences developed in four years of college will provide the student with an insatiable quest for deeper knowledge and understanding throughout his/her life.

It is recommended that each State System institution carefully review its program of general education in view of establishing a capstone course or other experience toward the end of the student's bachelor's degree program to determine the extent to which the goals of general education have been met. Some institutions might wish to offer a capstone course, some might wish to conduct a written or oral examination, whereas others might prefer to simply move part of the general education requirement to the upper-division level.

### **C. REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS**

Following is a list of requirements, standards, and recommendations for use by institutions in the development and evaluation of bachelor's degree programs. Also, this section will be helpful to the State Regents in reviewing both new and existing baccalaureate programs to help determine their quality and viability.

1. Traditional bachelor's degrees--all degrees with the exception of professional or conservatory-type degrees--should be attainable in four years of full-time academic study. Bachelor's degrees shall be based upon at least 120 semester hours of course work excluding physical education activity courses.
2. The faculty of the awarding institution should have an opportunity to make a judgment as to the candidate's fitness for the degree. Therefore, a minimum of 30 hours of resident credit applied toward the bachelor's degree shall be taken at the awarding institution, exclusive of correspondence work.
3. Each bachelor's degree awarded by a State System institution shall be based on a minimum of 40 hours of general education excluding physical education activity courses. Normally, most general education courses will occur at the lower-division level; however, it is recommended that at least one upper-division general education course be required by the awarding institution.
4. Bachelor's degrees shall be based upon a minimum of 60 hours, excluding physical education activity courses, at a baccalaureate degree-granting institution, 40 hours of which must be upper-division course work excluding physical education activity courses. Upper-division courses should be taught at a level either sequentially above or conceptually higher than lower-division courses.

5. At least 15 of the final 30 hours applied toward the degree must be satisfactorily completed at the awarding institution.<sup>5</sup>
6. Bachelor's degrees should be based upon a minimum of 30 semester hours of credit in the area of specialization; however, the major area is defined by the institution. Of the 30 hours in the major field, 50 percent must be taken at the upper-division level.
7. Students recommended for the bachelor's degree must achieve a grade-point average of 2.0 as a minimum on all course work attempted, excluding any courses repeated or reprieved as detailed in the State Regents' Grading Policy and excluding physical education activity courses.
8. The requirements and standards set forth in this policy statement should be considered minimal, allowing for change by individual institutions upon approval by the State Regents.
9. Students must demonstrate computer proficiency, which includes the competent use of a variety of software and networking applications. This requirement may be completed through one of three options: 1) successfully complete a high school computer science course that meets the State Regents' high school curricular requirements, or 2) satisfy an institution's computer proficiency assessment, or 3) successfully complete college-level course work that the institution designates.<sup>6</sup>

#### **IV. INCLUSION OF U.S. HISTORY AND U.S. GOVERNMENT**

All students graduating from two-year and four-year institutions in the State System being awarded the associate or baccalaureate degree of any type must have completed at least six semester hours of college credit in U.S. History and U.S. Government.

##### **A. U.S. HISTORY**

U.S. History is defined as that discipline or field of study which presents a chronological record of significant events in the life of the United States of America. This discipline normally includes all of those political, demographic, geographic, social, economic, cultural, and related factors necessary to explain past events and to anticipate future ones. To meet the intent of the U.S. History requirement, a course of study (a) should be general in nature, covering a significant span of natural time; (b) should be taught by a faculty member in the discipline or department of history; and (c) should be listed in the institutional catalog under the title of U.S. History. Specialized courses in economic, social, cultural, or political history will thus not satisfy the intent of this policy.

##### **B. U.S. GOVERNMENT**

U.S. Government is that academic discipline which treats the origins, organization, and operation of the United States of America with regard to its political and governmental functions. To satisfy the U.S. Government requirement, a course of

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<sup>5</sup> Military students enrolled in programs such as the Servicemembers' Opportunity College (SOC) may be exempt from this requirement at the discretion of the institution.

<sup>6a</sup> This is a minimal requirement. An institution may adopt higher standards. This requirement is effective for first-time entering freshmen beginning fall 1998.

study (a) should be general in nature, rather than narrowly specific; and (b) should be taught under the auspices of the department of government or political science. In some instances, it may be desirable to satisfy this requirement by integrating U.S. History and U.S. Government into one comprehensive, sequential course of study.

**Effective Date:** The criteria and standards in this policy shall be effective for students entering State System colleges and universities beginning with the fall semester of 1994. Students currently pursuing degree programs under criteria and standards contained in existing institutional catalogs and consistent with past State Regents' policy shall have the option of continuing under those requirements so long as continuous progress is being made toward graduation on a systematic basis.

**Refer to related policies:**

- Standards of Education Related to Credit for  
Extracurricular Learning ..... II-2-76
- Policy Statement on Admission To, Retention In, and  
Transfer Among Colleges and Universities of the State System ..... II-2-35

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