

Basics of the New General Education Curriculum Approval Process

The general education curriculum is best imagined as having two parts.

Part I (Critical Foundations) refers to the competencies: These are First Year, Critical Thinking, Creative Process, Health & Wellness, Information Literacy, Intercultural Competence, Oral Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Scientific Inquiry, Writing (3 levels), and the Culminating General Education Experience. Each of the competencies has a definition and learning outcomes, which must be included on the course outline and/or syllabus for the course.

To have a course approved for a competency designation, there are two options.

Option 1, regular offering: If a department determines that some of its courses should always count as a specific competency, then the course outline should be revised to include the learning outcomes of the competency. In addition, it must be clear from the outline, that the learning outcomes will be met by the course. This may mean revising the outline if it is an additional goal of the course. If it was generally part of the curriculum, then a sentence or paragraph pointing out which parts of the outline address the competency learning outcomes would be sufficient. It is important to note that those reviewing the course outlines may not be experts in your field, so providing clarity for the casual reader is important. When revising a course outline, follow the curriculum approval process listed here:

<http://wcsu.edu/academics/curriculumworkflow/pdf/revise-course-outline.pdf>

Option 2, one-time offering: If a department submits a course for a one-time approval (for example, a First Year designated course one semester), then a syllabus should be submitted, not the course outline. In this case, the learning outcomes must be on the syllabus and like in the course outline, it should be clear how the competency learning outcomes are addressed. For example, this may include topics, assignments, or readings. When submitting a course for a one-time approval, follow the curriculum approval process listed

here: <http://wcsu.edu/academics/curriculumworkflow/pdf/revise-course-gened-designation.pdf>

Part II (Explorations) of the general education curriculum refers to the breadth component of the curriculum. The only qualification for this category is that the course be outside of the student's major discipline. Any course other than those in the major discipline counts. For example, an English major may take anything except a course with an ENG designation to fulfill this requirement. A JLA student may take anything except a course with a JLA designation to fulfill this requirement. Breadth courses may satisfy competencies, but they do not have to do so. For many students, some of their competencies will be satisfied in their major, leaving the breadth courses open to minors or other interests as the student sees fit. There is no need to submit a breadth course for approval.

Please review the sample syllabi and outlines for examples of how to make the connections clear.

Additional Suggestions for Implementation

Given the vast number of courses to be reviewed, departments might consider starting with 100-level courses this year, as first-year students will need a range of options, and 100-level courses tend to be recruiting tools for majors. Additional consideration should be given to courses within the major that might be beneficial to the students to have count as one of their competencies. For example,

1. Senior thesis and capstone courses are generally good fits for Writing Tier 3 and Culminating General Education Experience.
2. Many early courses would be good fits for Information Literacy (particularly an early research oriented course).
3. Several majors include a quantitative research component, which may be a good fit for a Quantitative Reasoning competency.

This will serve as enough to get started and test out the new model. Then things can expand in year two.

Finally, there will be assessment planning for the general education competencies going on all year. Departments will need to submit syllabi to demonstrate the inclusion of the learning outcomes. The General Education Committee may eventually request assignments for internal evaluation purposes and/or external evaluation by NEASC.