

# General Education Curriculum Review and Revision Summary

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION REVIEW & REVISION  
EXECUTIVE TASK FORCE

## Executive Summary

General Education is defined as “the part of a liberal education curriculum shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capacities” (American Association of Colleges and Universities). The general education review process began in October 2019 and culminated in a proposed new vision, set of goals and learning outcomes, and structure, outlined below.

### Vision:

Illinois State University’s General Education Curriculum prepares students who can thrive in a complex, interconnected, and global world because they are:

- Informed by knowledge of the natural, sociocultural, technical, and creative worlds and able to critically analyze this knowledge.
- Engaged with cross-disciplinary skills and the research/scholarly tools to exercise intellectual curiosity; and
- Responsible for acting with an understanding of personal agency, civic and democratic values, and social justice as they learn how to apply their knowledge and skills to make positive contributions in their communities, democracies, and the world.

### Goals and Learning Outcomes:

The goals of the General Education Curriculum are to ensure all students graduating from Illinois State University are informed, engaged, and responsible learners capable of employing multiple systems and tools to creatively address local, state, national, and global challenges. To achieve this, there are 15 core learning outcomes.

Informed learner: A deeper understanding of the world, both as human beings and as contributing individuals, is essential. This understanding must accompany an awareness of the intersections and permeability of disciplinary boundaries associated with knowledge. Through the General Education Curriculum, students will have opportunities to learn how to:

- 1.1 Examine the human condition (imagination, expression, and/or cultures).
- 1.2 Compare and contrast interrelations within and among global or cross-cultural communities.
- 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.

Engaged learner: The cross-disciplinary skills students need are extensive, sophisticated, and expanding with the increase of new technologies. These skills extend beyond core concepts to include the ways of investigating and interacting with human society and the natural world. As students progress through the General Education Curriculum and into their major/degree programs, students will learn to:

- 2.1 Communicate in diverse settings and groups (orally, visually, and in writing).
- 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.
- 2.3 Integrate information discerningly from a variety of sources.

- 2.4 Manage change through intellectual and digital agility.
- 2.5 Collaborate in diverse teams.
- 2.6 Transform knowledge into judgment and action.
- 2.7 Derive meaning from experience and information gathered through observation.

Responsible learner: The integrity of a democratic society depends on individuals' sense of social responsibility, ethical judgment, and concern for others. These attributes contribute to the exploration of important issues in ways that respect a variety of viewpoints and lead to a deeper understanding of the world. The General Education Curriculum will foster the development of these qualities among students. Specifically, students will learn how to:

- 3.1 Demonstrate responsibility for contributing to a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.
- 3.2 Demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.
- 3.3 Enact values and practices reflecting democratic processes.
- 3.4 Engage respectfully with multiple perspectives.
- 3.5 Justify a position based on ethics, consequence(s) of decision, and/or personal values.

**Structure:**

Students must take a total of 33 credit hours in the designated course categories.

Category	# of credit hours
Information Fluency Through Writing	3
Communication Inquiry	3
Applied Writing Inquiry	3
Quantitative Literacy	3
Scientific Literacy	3
Exploring the Human Condition	3
Creative Arts	3
Individuals and Society	3
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics	3
Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement	3
General Education Elective	3

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## Introduction

General Education is defined as “the part of a liberal education curriculum shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capacities” (American Association of Colleges and Universities). This review and proposal are the result of almost five years of careful work by the Executive Task Force and members of the faculty and staff who served on smaller working groups and as consultants. These members of the university community worked to review the University’s existing General Education Curriculum and, after consulting with students, faculty, and staff, develop a proposal for updating our program to make it more student-centered, flexible, and innovative.

## Task Force Membership

**Co-Chairs (2022+):** Chris Horvath (PHI), Cheri Simonds (COM)

**Co-Chairs (2019-2021):** Jennifer Friberg, (Cross Endowed Chair, CIPD, CSD) and Erin Mikulec, (TCH)

**Consultant:** Shari Zeck, Retired ISU College of Fine Arts & Milner Library

### Members-Executive Task Force:

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### Consultations:

Allison Alcorn, MUS; Jae Baek, MAT; Jeff Barrett, MAT; Stephanie Brodnick, MAT; Katherine Ellison, ENG; Sarah Hassani, MAT; May Jadallah, TCH/CeMaST; Chris Merrell, TEC/CeMaST; Sharon Mersch, MAT; Wade Nichols, BSC; Ann Schmidt, MAT; George Seelinger, MAT; Janet Wilson, THE; College Curriculum Committees;

## Process

In fall 2019, in consultation with the Council for General Education (CGE), Provost Jan Murphy requested a task force be formed to review general education. College Deans distributed a call for faculty and staff interested in serving on the General Education Executive Task Force that would drive this work. This task force was formed with these volunteers and a few stakeholders from outside of the colleges. Additional volunteers not placed on the General Education Executive Task Force were all placed in work groups.

The General Education Executive Task Force first met on October 30, 2019, to begin the review process. Provost Murphy gave the charge to the task force. From this, the Task Force developed core principles that would guide its work.

### *Core Principles:*

The new General Education Curriculum should be:

- student-centered
- flexible for time to degree
- innovative
- a general education curriculum in which faculty want to teach
- created with consideration of assessment
- between 30-36 credit hours based on the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act, the Higher Learning Commission minimum of 30 hours, and the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI)
- transfer/IAI friendly

## Plan/Timeline

- Fall 2019
  - o Council on General Education and Provost Murphy issued charge to review and potentially revise general education. Any revisions to General Education must follow the procedures outlined in [Appendix A](#).
  - o Co-Chairs named – Jennifer Friberg, Erin Mikulec.
  - o Call for volunteers issued through the College Deans.
  - o General Education Executive Task Force members selected with representatives from all colleges and other stakeholders.
  - o October 30 – first meeting held of the General Education Executive Task Force.
  - o The General Education Executive Task Force discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the current General Education Curriculum, brainstormed ideas for an ideal new curriculum, guiding principles, and developed draft questions for focus groups and surveys.
  - o Held monthly meetings of the executive work group to update progress and identify next steps.
- Spring 2020
  - o Established work groups included focus groups, best practices, assessment, structure, and learning outcomes.
  - o Students completed a general education survey before the task force started, but the data were pertinent to this group's purpose. Data from this survey were reviewed and

- discussed by the executive task force. The 2019 and 2022 [general education student surveys](#) are available in an online dashboard and were used throughout the process.
- o A best practices/bench marking exercise was completed to identify general education practices of benchmark and other leading institutions.
  - o Dr. Jeri Beggs (Department of Marketing) with assistance from Mr. David Giovagnoli (graduate assistant) facilitated 12 focus groups:
    - 4 faculty groups, 4 advisors' groups, 2 administrator groups, 2 student groups (additional groups were halted early due to COVID)
    - These focus groups gathered input from campus stakeholders related to the strengths of and opportunities for improvement in the General Education Curriculum. (Appendix B)
- Summer 2020/Fall 2020
    - o A new structure was drafted, discussed, and altered.
    - o A new vision was drafted, discussed, and altered.
    - o A new set of learning outcomes was drafted, discussed, and altered.
  - Spring 2021
    - o Informal review and discussion of proposed structure with 103 stakeholders: CGE (3/23/21), work group members not on the General Education Executive Task Force others, (4/7/2021), UCC (4/28/21), Honors (4/28/21), advisors (6/2/21).
    - o Structure revisions continued.
  - Summer 2021
    - o Established 4 more work groups including academic bands, 12-hour bands, and topic areas (pathways).
    - o Developed definitions for all areas of the structure.
  - Fall 2021
    - o Work continues with learning outcomes.
    - o October 1 retreat to refine structure and definitions.
    - o Work continued on category definitions.
  - Spring 2022
    - o Continued work on definitions, learning outcomes, and structure.
    - o Presented progress to the college curriculum committees (Milner, COB, CAS, CAST, CFA, COE).
    - o Presented progress to the Council for General Education, Academic Affairs Committee of the Senate, University Curriculum committee.
    - o The 2022 [general education student survey](#) was completed. An online dashboard comparing 2019 and 2022 results was created. The results were sent to the General Education Task Force, CGE, and the departments with general education courses.
    - o Executive Committee voted to retain the pathways within the proposed structure but not what those pathways would be.
    - o Mapped learning outcomes within the Communication category.
  - Summer 2022
    - o Mapped learning outcomes with the assistance of discipline faculty to Quantitative Literacy & Scientific Inquiry categories.
  - Fall 2022

- o Work groups mapped learning outcomes with the assistance of discipline faculty in communication and writing, social and behavioral sciences, fine arts, Humanities, and STEM.
- o Work groups refined definitions based on learning outcome mapping.
- o Completed and analyzed a faculty wide survey focused on writing skills and needs of our students.
- Spring 2023
  - o Work groups mapped learning outcomes for the Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement and writing inquiry.
  - o Learning outcomes were revised and condensed, and category titles and definitions were finalized.
  - o A survey focusing on student writing needs was distributed to all faculty by University Assessment Services.
  - o Based on the faculty wide survey, three hours were added to the structure with the addition of the Information Fluency through Writing category.
- Fall 2023
  - o Full draft proposal was completed.
  - o Campus Community review process begins.
    - [Town Halls](#) were held on September 15 (n=54) and September 29 (n=30).
    - Online survey opened to the campus community.
- Spring 2024
  - o Finalized category definition changes based on town hall and survey feedback.
  - o Submitted complete proposal to the Council for General Education to begin the shared governance process.

## Concerns with the Current General Education Curriculum

The Academic Senate asks that the General Education Curriculum be reviewed every five years. Often this is a general review with minimal changes. However, Provost Murphy and the CGE requested an in-depth review with the possibility of significant changes to the General Education Curriculum. In doing so, weaknesses of the current General Education Curriculum were identified through assessment activities and included:

- The need to improve transferability between ISU and IAI.
- Limited number of courses/seats in some categories (e.g. LH).
- Some categories are too discipline specific and place a high burden on a small number of departments to provide enough courses to meet demand.
- No significant changes have been made in 30 years.
- Concern that the current structure is too science and math heavy.
- The two-tiered structure makes course scheduling difficult.
- Despite the 39 required hours, 28 programs have a 1 course exemption.
- Current structure does not connect to the major in a meaningful way.
- Students do not understand the “why” of general education and view general education as a burden or checklist rather than an opportunity.



- Many faculty do not want to teach within the current General Education Curriculum. The curriculum must better reflect the expertise of 21<sup>st</sup> century faculty.
- Too many categories (13) resulting in a curriculum that lacks sufficient coherence, predictability, and focus.
- Difficulty with assessment of the current General Education Curriculum (a concern in ISU's last HLC review).
- Many general education classes are large and lack the pedagogy to engage students like small classes do. While large courses are needed due to budget limitations, many of the courses in the current curriculum were initially conceived of as smaller classes with accordingly different pedagogies.

## Review of Best Practices

A work group reviewed benchmark institutions and literature in general education. They identified the following practices that are consistent with ISU's core values and strategic plan:

- Integrative learning and problem-solving inquiry through a combination and integration of curricular, co-curricular, and community-based learning.
- Civic-minded, interdisciplinary, and adaptive.
- Equips students to be effective participants in global conversations and a global economy.
- Coherent and integrated course work through meaningful pathways, sequenced courses, or thematic threads.
- Has a civic engagement or professional development component.
- Chronicle of Higher Education identifies these common elements of a modern general education curriculum:
  - Coherent and continuous – develop skills and knowledge that prepare students for higher level coursework rather than a buffet of courses.
  - Focus on ways of thinking – focus on how the discipline solves problems and ways of knowing rather than a collection of major introductory courses.
  - Flexible – reduce the cumbersome curriculum to allow double counting, courses related to majors, etc.
  - Interdisciplinary – orient more courses around big questions rather than one discipline specific; team taught; experiential learning components.
  - Scaffolded – infuse general education throughout the 4 years rather than the first 2, capstone course for general education.
  - Include civic engagement and professional development.
  - Incorporates [high impact practices](#).
  - Focused on learning outcomes – show evidence of learning, how general education connects to the rest of a student's education.
  - Enhances advising – help students choose courses wisely and spread them throughout the 4 years.

## Vision and Learning Outcomes

The Vision and Learning Outcomes were adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) initiative, *Greater Expectations: The Commitment to Quality as a Nation Goes to College*, and general principals laid out by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). General Education is defined as “the part of a liberal education curriculum shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capacities” (AAC& U). Each general education course within a specific course category must meet and assess the required learning outcomes identified for that category. Secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

### Vision:

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- Informed by knowledge of the natural, sociocultural, technical, and creative worlds and able to critically analyze this knowledge.
- Engaged with cross-disciplinary skills and the research/scholarly tools to exercise intellectual curiosity; and
- Responsible for acting with an understanding of personal agency, civic and democratic values, and social justice as they learn how to apply their knowledge and skills to make positive contributions in their communities, democracies, and the world.

### Goals and Learning Outcomes:

The goals of the General Education Curriculum are to ensure all students graduating from Illinois State University are informed, engaged, and responsible learners to become successful participants in careers, engaged citizens in a democracy, and thoughtful leaders in a global society (AASCU). To achieve this, there are 15 core learning outcomes.

Informed learner: A deeper understanding of the world, both as human beings and as contributing individuals, is essential. This understanding must accompany an awareness of the intersections and permeability of disciplinary boundaries associated with knowledge. Through the General Education Curriculum, students will have opportunities to learn how to:

- 1.1 Examine the human condition (imagination, expression, and/or cultures).
- 1.2 Compare and contrast interrelations within and among global or cross-cultural communities.
- 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.

Engaged learner: The cross-disciplinary skills students need are extensive, sophisticated, and expanding with the increase of new technologies. These skills extend beyond core concepts to include the ways of investigating and interacting with human society and the natural world. As students progress through the General Education Curriculum and into their major/degree programs, students will learn to:

- 2.1 Communicate in diverse settings and groups (orally, visually, and in writing).

- 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.
- 2.3 Integrate information discerningly from a variety of sources.
- 2.4 Manage change through intellectual and digital agility.
- 2.5 Collaborate in diverse teams.
- 2.6 Transform knowledge into judgment and action.
- 2.7 Derive meaning from experience and information gathered through observation.

**Responsible learner:** The integrity of a democratic society depends on individuals' sense of social responsibility, ethical judgment, and concern for others. These attributes contribute to the exploration of important issues in ways that respect a variety of viewpoints and lead to a deeper understanding of the world. The General Education Curriculum will foster the development of these qualities among students, specifically students will learn how to:

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- 3.2 Demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.
- 3.3 Enact values and practices reflecting democratic processes.
- 3.4 Engage respectfully with multiple perspectives.
- 3.5 Justify a position based on ethics, consequence(s) of decision, and/or personal values.

## Proposed Structure

The structure work group reviewed our current General Education Curriculum (Appendix C) and the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) (Appendix D) outlined in the [Illinois Articulation Act](#). From fall 2019 to fall 2023, we had 50.2% of our students graduate with ISU's General Education Curriculum and 49.8% of graduates who completed the IAI GECC or other general education package.

**Course Categories:** Students must take a total of 33 credit hours in the designated course categories.

Category	# of credit hours
Information Fluency Through Writing	3
Communication Inquiry	3
Applied Writing Inquiry	3
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Scientific Literacy	3
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Creative Arts	3
Individuals and Society	3
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Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement	3
General Education Elective	3

## Proposed Descriptions – Course Categories

### Information Fluency Through Writing (3 hours)

#### Description

What does it mean to write ethically? How do you investigate and explore differing viewpoints? How do you formulate your own opinions and defend and document them with reliable evidence? How do you articulate the complexity of issues by using, sharing, and creating information? As you develop as a writer, these are some of the many questions you will contemplate and address.

Information fluency is the ability to critically engage with ideas, information, and points of view represented in a variety of texts and genres. Demonstrating information fluency through writing requires the ability to formulate an inquiry, identify and cite sources from multiple venues and formats, evaluate information for credibility and relevance, and synthesize and incorporate information into a structured written argument.

#### Courses in this Category

Courses in this category can address any topic through disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspectives that incorporate reading, viewing, interpreting, and writing. These courses provide a foundation for students to engage with information, ideas, opinions, and arguments about contemporary and/or historical issues, real-world problems, or other significant topics. In alignment with the practice of writing inquiry, courses cover fundamental tools to practice effective and ethical writing, particularly the skills of information fluency. Courses explore writing through research and practice building critical thinking, the ability to synthesize information, develop the mechanics and processes of writing, and ethically produce written texts.

#### Student Learning

Through exploration of writing research and practice, students will use written communication and inquiry to establish the skills needed to analyze different viewpoints, consume and produce written texts in an ethical manner, and apply their knowledge to engage with local, national, and global issues to prepare them for life-long learning.

#### Assessed Learning Outcomes

Courses in this category must include assignments that allow the assessment of the following primary learning outcomes:

- 2.3 Integrate information discerningly from a variety of sources.
- 2.4 Manage change through intellectual and digital agility.
- 2.6 Transform knowledge into judgment and action.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

### **Communication Inquiry (3 hours)**

#### **Description**

What is ethical and effective communication? How will studying communication help you maintain positive relationships, land that dream job, or become an active member of society? Communication inquiry enhances your personal, professional, and social lives through communication competence and information fluency.

#### **Courses in this Category**

Communication courses will prepare students to effectively and purposefully express themselves and listen to others in a variety of communication settings. They will prepare students to present information to an audience using research, evidence, and reasoning. Additionally, students will be prepared to participate in group communication processes and decision-making to analyze socially relevant issues from multiple perspectives.

#### **Student Learning**

Communication is an essential life skill that enhances students' personal, professional, and social lives. Communication Inquiry is the study of communication concepts and processes to improve student communication competence, ethical communication, communication confidence, critical thinking, all with the goal of becoming curious, engaged, and responsible members of a democratic society.

#### **Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must include assignments that allow the assessment of the following primary learning outcomes:

- 2.1 Communicate in diverse settings and groups (orally, visually, and in writing).
- 2.3 Integrate information discerningly from a variety of sources.
- 3.3 Enact values and practices reflecting democratic processes.
- 3.4 Listen and engage respectfully to multiple perspectives.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

### **Applied Writing Inquiry (3 hours)**

#### **Description**

How do you determine the method and format of writing in a particular situation? What written contexts or frameworks are expected and required in a given profession? What are the implications of utilizing inappropriate formats and generating misinformation in an academic, creative, professional, or technical environment? What does it mean to be an ethical writer in a particular field? In your development as a writer, applying these skills in a variety of scenarios will help you become familiar with writing as an everyday activity that can be researched and learned to communicate more effectively and purposefully in the world.

Applied Writing Inquiry is the practice of researching writing concepts and processes required to produce texts across various genres; to understand how to communicate in new or unfamiliar academic, professional, or technical writing situations; practice the mechanics, writing concepts, and processes of writing; and to write as a culturally specific social activity across diverse sites and communities.

### **Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category emphasize student learning through inquiry-based writing research applied to the practical production of academic, creative, professional, or technical writing texts, rather than reproducing “general” writing formulas. All courses in this category must include three components: research inquiry of actual writing and genres in academic, professional, or technical writing situations; application of writing research in the production of texts for the course; and demonstrated awareness of communicating effectively and ethically in writing.

### **Student Learning**

Students will advance their written communication and inquiry with a specific focus on academic, professional, and/or technical writing to prepare them for writing within their majors, further academic study, and/or in their chosen career path. The ultimate objective is to help students become culturally situated writers working toward a more just, equitable world through written communication and inquiry.

### **Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must include assignments that allow the assessment of the following primary learning outcomes:

- 2.1 Communicate in diverse settings and groups (orally, visually, and in writing).
- 2.3 Integrate information discerningly from a variety of sources.
- 2.6 Transform knowledge into judgment and action.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

## **Quantitative Literacy (3 hours)**

### **Description**

How can you use mathematical reasoning to guide decision making processes that influence individuals and society? How do you know if quantitative reasoning is being used in ways that are ethically just and logically sound? What are implications of the use and misuse of numeric data?

Quantitative literacy includes principles of logic and critical reasoning that apply to everyday situations, organizational and societal structures, and the natural world. Quantitative literacy involves the analysis of data to make informed decisions that are ethically just and logically sound.

### **Courses in this Category**

Quantitative Literacy courses will provide the foundation to model and address current and future

problems as well as explore opportunities through mathematical, logical, and/or statistical methods. The requirements can be satisfied by one of two options: (1) pure-mathematics, statistics, logic, or computing/programming/computer science courses or (2) applied-courses in which students make substantial use of mathematics, computing, and statistics.

### **Student Learning**

Quantitative reasoning helps students understand the vocabulary of numbers and numeric processes, how numeric rules and principles are used and misused, and how information in our lives can be put into numeric and statistical terms. Because members of society must make many decisions involving data, being familiar with valid forms of logical reasoning – being quantitatively literate - is critically important to being a responsible member of society.

### **Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must include assignments that allow the assessment of the following primary learning outcomes:

- 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.
- 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

## **Scientific Literacy (3 hours)**

### **Description**

How do scientists formulate and answer questions? How are theories supported by evidence? How do you use new information to revise, reject, or accept theories? How can disputes over science be settled? Scientific literacy is knowledge, understanding, and appropriate application of scientific concepts and processes required for responsible decision making, and participation in civic, cultural, and economic affairs.

### **Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category emphasize inquiry-based learning. Understanding the process of science and the application of scientific concepts is a central goal of each course. Courses in this category include (1) the study of scientific methodologies, (2) the application of scientific concepts and practices within the context of at least one scientific discipline, and (3) the examination of the intersection of scientific inquiry with the larger cultural, political, and/or economic context.

### **Student Learning**

Scientific Literacy courses support students in becoming familiar with scientific methodologies for developing an increasingly accurate understanding of the universe based on empirical evidence. An important objective is for students to develop knowledge that allows them to participate responsibly in the application of science in society.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet the following primary learning outcomes:

- 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.
- 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.
- 2.7 Derive meaning from experience and information gathered through observation.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Exploring the Human Condition (3 hours)****Description**

What defines us as humans? How does our common humanity manifest differently across cultures? How has human thought evolved throughout history? How does the past shape the present and inform the future? How do people organize their lives? How do people live together in a democratic society? How do humans relate to the natural world? These are just some of the big questions—with no single right answers—that scholars of the Humanities explore by looking at how humans have grappled with and expressed their humanity through literature, art, cultural traditions and behavior, history, philosophy, religion, politics, popular culture, mass media, and more.

**Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category may pose any Humanities-related topic through any Humanities-based disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach. Courses should pose big questions (i.e., those with no single fixed answer) to examine the human condition through readings, films, cultural artifacts/texts/performance in any context (global or cross-cultural communities). Courses should provide students with opportunities to demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures and listen and engage respectfully with multiple perspectives in relation to course materials as well as their classmates and faculty.

**Student Learning**

The Humanities are critical to public life and civic engagement. Students will learn to define and discuss moral and social values; interpret literary texts and historical documents; analyze works of art and explore ideas. Students will learn not only what these things mean, but why they are important. Courses in this category cultivate the skills essential to being curious, responsible, and engaged members of society: careful reading, informed dialogue, an awareness of our place in a complex world.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must include assignments that allow the assessment of the following primary learning outcomes:

- 1.1 Examine the human condition (imagination, expression, and/or cultures).
- 1.2 Compare and contrast interrelations within and among global or cross-cultural communities.
- 3.2 Demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.



- 3.4 Listen and engage respectfully to multiple perspectives.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

### **Creative Arts (3 hours)**

#### **Description**

How do artists interact with the world and imagine and create new worlds and ideas? What role do audiences play in creating meaning? How do you understand style and skill in creative practice? How do artists engage with materials? The Creative Arts involve modes of expression that use skill and imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others through creative writing; visual and the plastic arts; creative technologies; and performing arts.

#### **Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category explore theory, philosophy, and the creative practices of performers, interdisciplinary artists and makers, informed by the historical and cultural analysis of works and contemporary thought.

#### **Student Learning**

Students will gain creativity, self-expression, critical thinking, persuasion, creative problem solving, collaboration, and communication skills through understanding the world around them. Engaging with and learning about the creative arts develops and nurtures creativity, individuality, and identity informed by global perspectives.

#### **Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must include assignments that allow the assessment of the following primary learning outcomes:

- 1.1 Examine the human condition (imagination, expression, and/or cultures).
- 3.2 Demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.
- 3.4 Listen and engage respectfully to multiple perspectives.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

### **Individuals and Societies (3 credits)**

#### **Description**

How might individual characteristics, processes, and behaviors influence and be influenced by organizations and environments? How do societal systems, structures, and norms affect human attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors? What does it mean to be a person who participates in society? This category looks inward at individual human processes and conditions and outward at human societies, institutions, relationships, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The exploration of human behavior and

cognition, human histories, social/human geography, diverse cultures, political and economic systems, and global societies are some of the ways this category works to enhance our understanding of what it means to be a person intersecting with society and the environment.

### **Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category examine human characteristics and processes, and may take disciplinary, multidisciplinary, or interdisciplinary approaches to analyze individual and/or societal characteristics and processes.

### **Student Learning**

Knowledge gained through the study of the intersections of individuals and society helps students critically evaluate existing social structures and policies to build a more equitable, inclusive, just, and sustainable future. Students will grow in their ability to effectively and critically engage in civic processes.

### **Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must include assignments that allow the assessment of the following primary learning outcomes:

- 1.1 Examine the human condition (imagination, expression, and/or cultures).
- 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.
- 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

## **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (3 hours)**

### **Description**

What can you learn from combining multiple research fields to investigate questions and problems? How are advances in scientific understanding and technologies improving or hurting our global society and the natural world? How do we anticipate and prepare for future challenges?

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) combine multiple approaches to gathering, analyzing, and applying information to solve real-world problems. The integration of these approaches allows for a more comprehensive understanding of complex problems and the ability to develop innovative solutions using technological, scientific, and computational tools and methods.

### **Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category must integrate two or more STEM disciplines. This includes courses that combine modes of inquiry or techniques from at least two disciplines to address opportunities and challenges. STEM courses focus on creative ways to address various local, state, and global challenges through modelling; analyzing and interpreting data; obtaining, evaluating, and communicating scientific, quantitative, and technical information; and exploring the philosophy and ethics of STEM disciplines.

**Student Learning**

Through this process, students will gain knowledge and develop the ability to explore the world around them through the principles and methodologies that guide the various natural and applied sciences.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must include assignments that allow the assessment of the following primary learning outcomes:

- 1.3 Distinguish means of modeling the natural, social, technical, logical, and/or creative worlds.
- 2.2 Analyze problems using systematically acquired data.
- 2.7 Derive meaning from experience and information gathered through observation.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement (3 hours)****Description**

How can you use what you learn in the classroom to make a difference in the world? How can you use your knowledge, skills, and values to address complex topics with civility? How can you enact values of democracy and justice? Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement courses help students address local, state, national, or global challenges through reflection on learning by doing.

**Courses in this Category**

Courses in this category cultivate civic skills by providing opportunities to apply course material to address opportunities and challenges and use experiential learning (EL) to engage students in hands-on activities and structured reflection. EL generally consists of concrete/hands-on experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization (analyzing concepts), and active experimentation (applying knowledge in new contexts). This category encourages interdisciplinary problem-solving, personal development, and ethical and informed civic engagement.

Examples of Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement courses may include course-based undergraduate research; study abroad; applied or community-engaged research; gen-ed designated internships; case studies (based on societal concerns); social entrepreneurship; field experiences; interactive simulations; service-learning; performance-based learning (such as activities/works of art performed for an audience and revised based on reflection and experimentation).

**Student Learning**

Students will learn to address complex challenges, to reflect on their lived experiences, and to explore how to transform their knowledge into ethical action. Students will learn to apply knowledge to new and complex contexts and will develop skills that prepare them to be informed, ethical, and engaged community members and life-long learners.

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Because of the unique nature of this category more flexibility with respect to the required learning outcomes is necessary. Courses in this category must meet at least 2 of the following learning outcomes:

- 2.5 Collaborate in diverse teams.
- 2.6 Transform knowledge into judgment and action.
- 2.7 Derive meaning from experience and information gathered through observation.
- 3.1 Demonstrate responsibility for contributing to a more just, equitable, and sustainable world.
- 3.2 Demonstrate respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, and their cultures.
- 3.3 Enact values and practices reflecting democratic processes.
- 3.4 Listen and engage respectfully to multiple perspectives.
- 3.5 Justify a position based on ethics, consequence(s) of decision, or personal values.

Additional secondary learning outcomes may vary from course to course.

**General Education Elective (3 hours)****Description**

The General Education Elective provides students the opportunity to pursue their unique interests, explore major and minor options, build courses toward an interdisciplinary minor, fulfill academic needs, or try something new.

**Courses in this Category**

All courses approved for the General Education Curriculum will fulfill the General Education Elective.

**Student Learning**

Completing a General Education Elective course allows students to expand knowledge and abilities in the subject area of their choice. It may satisfy the requirements of one of their other academic programs (e.g., major, minor, certificate).

**Assessed Learning Outcomes**

Courses in this category must meet the learning outcomes associated with the category in which the elective course resides.

**General Education Certificates**

Undergraduate certificates are a group of courses focusing on a specific area of knowledge or competency. General Education certificates provide students the option to concentrate some of their general education courses around a theme. Certificates in General Education require students to complete at least 9 credit hours in an approved track. These tracks, proposed by faculty and approved by the Council on General Education, include courses from at least three different course categories. Completed certificates will appear on the student's transcript.

Faculty members who wish to propose new General Education Certificates should choose a broad organizing theme (e.g. Environmental Sustainability, Global Perspectives) and identify general education courses from at least three course categories clearly related to that theme. Organizing General Education courses around a certificate is optional. Students can successfully complete their General Education without earning a certificate.

## Potential Changes/Clarifications from Former General Education

1. Departments will submit an updated syllabus every three years where they will be kept for advisors to reference when helping students select courses.
2. General education courses should be reviewed on a 5-year rotation mirroring and coinciding with the IAI review.
3. Resubmit a syllabus and a short commentary on how the course has change/not changed over the years, and maybe how it still meets the General Education category.
4. Non-General Education IDS courses will also be reviewed by the CGE on a 5-year cycle.
5. Eliminate pre-requisites on General Education courses unless there is an absolute NEED for the content from the pre-requisite. Pre-requisites will be reviewed by the Council for General Education.
6. Major blocked General Education courses are strongly discouraged; however, up to 50 percent of the seats offered can be reserved for majors.
7. Each course is limited to one category.
8. No majors are exempt from any course category.
9. Students pursuing a BA degree will be unable to substitute LAN 115 in place of any category.
10. General Education courses must be at least 1 credit hour, but students must complete the required number of credit hours to fulfill the General Education category.
11. Creative arts performance courses may be submitted for General Education approval.
12. There is no limit to the number of General Education courses that can also be used as major requirements.
13. Assessment of General Education learning outcomes associated with each category is required of all instructors teaching courses in that category. Assessment will be a planned effort managed by the Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Education and University Assessment Services.
14. General Education course can be any level (100, 200, or 300) with limited/no pre-requisites.

## Assessment

Assessment of General Education allows ISU to analyze strengths and areas for improvement of the curriculum, inform General Education Curriculum decisions, and help students meet General Education learning outcomes.

A responsibility of the Council on General Education (CGE) is to "...periodically review and analyze existing General Education and IDS courses and programs, based on program objectives and student outcomes." The General Education assessment process will be created by University Assessment Services and representatives of the CGE. The Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Education will

be responsible for implementation of the assessment plan. CGE will be responsible for revisions to the plan and endorsing the plan. The process will be articulated in a *General Education Assessment Plan*. The plan will document an assessment timeline; strategies for engaging faculty; processes for collecting, analyzing, and using results; and methods for evaluating the general education assessment process.

## Implementation

Once a revised General Education Curriculum is approved through the shared governance process, an implementation plan will be developed by a committee of faculty and staff members. This implementation plan will include but is not limited to assessment, CGE curriculum review process, UCC curriculum review process for changes to majors and minors, establishment of certificates, and Campus Solutions changes.

## Needed Support

Focus group feedback; survey results; conversations with faculty, staff, and students; and the expert opinions of the General Education Executive Task Force all suggest that additional institutional support is needed for ISU's General Education Curriculum. Beyond the structural changes, supports are needed to ensure the revised curriculum is successful, the faculty are prepared to provide outstanding instruction, and students will graduate from Illinois State University as informed, engaged, and responsible learners. To achieve this, the following supports are requested:

1. **Dedicated student writing center.** A dedicated center for student writing support would help develop student writing across courses, majors, and colleges, including but not limited to, individual tutoring sessions, feedback sessions, scheduled course visits, workshops, writing communities, and online writing resources for students. The services of the writing center would expand the work of the Visor Center and necessitate hiring a director and additional well-trained peer writing consultants.
2. **Faculty support to teach writing.** Additional professional development opportunities are necessary to support faculty in their efforts to teach students to write more effectively across disciplines. This may include single workshops, semester long programs such as a faculty writing fellows program, and individual consultation opportunities for faculty. Areas for professional development include such things as how to create writing intensive courses within the discipline, methods for assessing and improving student writing, and creating meaningful writing assignments.
3. **Ongoing support and professional development for all instructors of the general education curriculum.** In many instances, teaching courses in the General Education Curriculum presents a different set of challenges and opportunities for instructors. Teachers need access to specialized professional development in areas such as instruction of large sections, teaching sections of mostly or exclusively FTIC students, assessment of general education learning outcomes, and quality online teaching. Instruction in the general education curriculum must be visibly and publicly valued by the university. Teaching excellence in general education courses must be recognized through dedicated teaching awards. Instructors in the General Education Curriculum must be afforded the opportunity to establish a mutually supportive community which will help

reinforce the value of general education instruction to new teachers and help students see the value of the general education component of their ISU degree.

4. **Ongoing support for professional development for academic advisors engaged in general education.** Advisors will need training to understand the new structure, its impact on majors, and how best to serve their students.
5. **Course development.** With 255+ current general education courses, support is needed to incentivize faculty to design courses for the new General Education Curriculum. Support, which may take the form of stipends, release time, CIPD workshops, grants for experiential learning, etc. must be provided for faculty who are designing or significantly revising a courses to meet the vision and outcomes of the General Education Curriculum.

## Appendix A: Changes to the Structure of General Education

**Procedure:** Structural changes to General Education, from modest revisions to new program designs, are complex initiatives that require campus-wide participation. Principles of such changes are as follows:

A call for revisions may be initiated by the Provost, Academic Senate, or other appropriate constituency. The formal charge to the General Education Task Force will come from the Provost who will announce the process's initiation to the university community.

The Provost will appoint a task force to review the effectiveness of the existing curriculum with authority to make recommendations for program changes. The task force will consult widely with campus constituencies (faculty, staff, students, chairs/directors and deans, the University Assessment Office, the Council on General Education, the Academic Senate), and will assure multiple means of gathering campus-wide feedback. The task force will consider that feedback as well as the relevant context for the changes, including the University's strategic plan, statewide transfer programs, and any other internal or external factors that may be pertinent.

The task force will make recommendations for change to the Provost.

The Provost will consider the merits of the recommendations and the feasibility of implementation, including staffing implications and other costs. The Provost may refer recommendations back to the task force for further consideration or may recommend changes to the Council on General Education.

The Council on General Education, a standing external committee of the Academic Senate, will conduct its review. CGE will involve, as appropriate, campus constituencies in its review. CGE will forward its recommendations to the University Curriculum Committee.

The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, a standing external committee of the Academic Senate, will review the proposed structure. Following its usual process, proposed revisions or new structure will circulate to the University community for comment. UCC will forward its recommendations to the Academic Senate.

The Academic Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate will review the proposed structure. It will make recommendations to the Academic Senate for discussion and action. If necessary, the Academic Senate, or its internal committees, may send the proposed structure back to the Council on General Education for further review and revisions.

If questions arise regarding feasibility, staffing implications and costs, or other budgetary matters, the Administrative Affairs and Budget Committee will review the budgetary implications of the proposed structure and report to the Academic Senate on its findings and recommendations. If necessary, the Academic Senate, or its internal committees, may then send the proposed structure back to the University Curriculum Committee for further review and revisions.

Upon approval by the Academic Senate, program changes will be published in the Undergraduate Catalog and implemented by appropriate academic and academic support units.



## Appendix B: Focus Groups Summary

General Education Curriculum Review  
Focus Group Summary: Compiled by Dr. Jeri Beggs, Facilitator  
May 1, 2020

### Number of Groups Completed

- 4-advisors
- 4-faculty
- 2-administrators (deans, chairs, directors)
- 2-students (1 University College peer advisors, 1 psych class)

### Overarching themes

- General education has a purpose and value
  - o Creating well-rounded citizen of the world
  - o Exploration of interests and “found” majors
  - o Exposure to diverse cultures, perspectives, majors, teaching styles, students, etc.
- Negative perception by all stakeholders
  - o Language around general education – just a gen ed, get gen ed out of the way, 39 hours of obligation
  - o Value is not clear to some stakeholders (students and parents in particular)
  - o Cultural focus on specialization and credentialing
- Breadth in courses and categories
- Too few seats in popular classes
- No opportunity to explore some majors such as teaching, business, etc.
- Missing contemporary topics (e.g., diversity and inclusion, mental health, etc.)
- Curriculum needs to be packaged and promoted to highlight benefits to students and parents

### Advisors

- Confusion abounds
  - o With IAI and ISU’s general education requirements
  - o Categories and terms (e.g., Language and Humanities)
  - o Group 1 vs. Group 2
- Students are not choosing courses based on exploration or interest but instead are choosing courses based on word-of-mouth (easy A, entertaining professor) and schedule
- Accessibility is an issue
  - o Students with priority registration have a completely different experience
  - o Students with financial need are often the last to register (due to holds, etc.)
- Current consumption of general education classes is not compatible with study abroad opportunities
- According to students, faculty expectations are quite different than students
  - o Students – introductory, “just a gen ed,” should be easier than major courses

- o Faculty – “taught like a senior seminar,” “recycling major course”

### **Students**

- Peer advisors articulated purpose and value, but the psychology class struggled to list strengths
- Math and science are viewed as obstacles
  - o Repeating high school material – does not fit with exploration or broadening viewpoint
  - o Students are choosing majors based on math requirements
  - o Want more practical options such as financial literacy
- Preference for more hours devoted to major
- Hurts grade point average
- Categories, titles, requirements, and exemptions are confusing
- Waste of time and money – Students and their parents do not understand the purpose or benefit of individual courses, the connection to core competencies such as critical thinking, or connection to major.

### **Faculty**

- “Bachelor’s degree should be viewed as something more than vocational
- There are departments and faculty devoted and passionate about teaching general education courses
- Assessment is lacking in general education, particularly in competency areas such as critical thinking, diversity, etc.
- Need more timely/contemporary topics – diversity, mental health, sustainability, globalization, etc.
- Foreign language should be encouraged if not required and incorporated more fully into general education curriculum
- Writing skills are a problem - English course is not providing necessary writing skills – many faculty don’t think they should be required to teach writing in their courses.
- Reading comprehension skills are poor
- Too many large classes
- Faculty cohorts across cross-listed courses or sections of courses would be helpful
- Teaching general education is viewed by many faculty members as hurting their career – ASPT document needs to reflect value of teaching general education courses
- Too much reliance on one college - all departments should contribute if this is a university initiative; all departments should be able to connect their discipline to general education goals

### **Administrators**

- Financial model provides no incentive to teach general education if not recruiting for majors
- Difficult to balance instructional capacity between general education classes and major classes
- Departments vary on staff philosophy, but most indicated that general education classes have more NTT instructors and major courses more tenure track faculty.
- Too few seats in popular courses
- Negative perceptions of teaching general education among faculty - viewed as service to the community for faculty and department

## Appendix C: Current ISU General Education Curriculum

The complete General Education Curriculum has 13 courses (39 semester hours), about one-third of the total credits required for graduation. All but 8 degree programs at ISU allow students to waive one of the 13 categories. No program can waive COM 110 or ENG 101.

1. Fine Arts
2. Humanities
3. Individuals and Civic Life
4. Language in the Humanities
5. Mathematics
6. Natural Science
7. Natural Science Alternatives
8. Quantitative Reasoning
9. Science, Mathematics, and Technology
10. Social Sciences
11. United States Traditions
12. COM 110
13. ENG 101

[General Education Courses on Course Finder by Category](#)

## Appendix D: Illinois Articulation Initiative General Education Core Curriculum

The [Illinois Articulation Initiative \(IAI\)](#) is a statewide transfer agreement among more than 100 public and private four-year and two-year higher education institutions in Illinois. The agreement is designed to facilitate students transferring between colleges and universities and works best for students who are undecided on the transfer-to institution that will grant their baccalaureate degree. The IAI General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) package consists of 12 to 13 courses (37 to 41 hours of credit) within a five-category designation. All schools participating in IAI agree to accept a completed IAI GECC package in lieu of their own comparable lower-division general education requirements.

The IAI GECC package requirements are as follows:

- [Communication](#): 3 courses (9 credits)
- [Humanities](#) and [Fine Arts](#): 3 courses (9 credits)
- [Mathematics](#): 1 to 2 courses (3 to 6 credits)
- [Physical](#) and [Life Sciences](#): 2 courses (7 to 8 credits)
- [Social and Behavioral Sciences](#): 3 courses (9 credits)

## Appendix E: References & Resources

- AAC&U Leap: <https://www.aacu.org/trending-topics/what-is-liberal-education>
- AAC&U Learning Outcomes: <https://www.aacu.org/initiatives/value-initiative/essential-learning-outcomes>
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- EAB. How 3 institutions are rethinking general education: <https://www.eab.com/research-and-insights/academic-affairs-forum/expert-insights/2017/how-three-colleges-are-rethinking-general-ed>
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- University of Wisconsin: <https://gened.wisc.edu/>
- UNC Greensboro: <https://catalog.uncg.edu/academic-regulations-policies/undergraduate-policies/general-education-program/#generaleducationcorerequirementstext>