

**General Education Policy Proposal**

The General Education Program at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh provides a broad foundation of knowledge and skills. The goals of the General Education Program are twofold: 1) to help students grow intellectually and expand their capacity to make reasoned, ethical decisions, and 2) to provide a common liberal arts experience that complements a specialized field of study. The following guidelines were established to ensure that the General Education Program at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh meets these goals.

**1. Upper level courses (300/400) will not be accepted for General Education credit except in a limited number of circumstances.**

*Rationale: General Education is expected to represent a broad-based, University-wide educational experience. Upper-level courses are often not available to all students, especially those in the professional colleges. In some limited circumstances, such as English Composition, an upper-level course is required of all students and will be accepted for General Education credit. Compelling reasons for proposing an upper-level course for General Education credit do not include increasing enrollment or growing the size of a major, as these reasons do not directly address the University's educational objectives.*

**2. General Education courses must be open to all students and must not be restricted to or directed primarily towards students of a particular professional school or program, except in a limited number of circumstances.**

*Rationale: This is based on a strongly worded recommendation from the higher learning commission.*

**3. Courses approved for one of the following categories must meet the requirements established in the corresponding definition. Note: This policy does not change current distribution requirements.**

<b>English and Advanced Composition</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Human Kinetics and Health Education</b>
<b>Non-Western Culture</b>	<b>Communication (Speech)*</b>	<b>Humanities</b>
<b>Natural Sciences</b>	<b>Social Sciences</b>	<b>Ethnic Studies</b>

**Proposals to change suggested definitions may be proposed by Departments, Divisions, or individuals using the appropriate form. Proposals to change accepted definitions must be approved by APGES, APC and Faculty Senate using the appropriate form. Note: APGES will develop the form should this policy be approved.**

*Rationale: Many departments within the University offer courses that may fulfill requirements in categories not traditionally considered a part of that department. The definitions provide a basis for determining which General Education category they fall into by the appropriate University governance structures.*

\*Communication (Speech) is not currently (as of Spring 2009) a General Education Requirement.

**4. All courses approved for General Education credit at UW Oshkosh must address at least one of the Essential Learning Outcomes approved by the Faculty Senate in the Spring 08 semester. Changes to the Essential Learning Outcomes approved by Faculty Senate will automatically replace existing Learning Outcomes.**

**To determine if the proposed course meets the requirements for addressing these goals, the course must have a detailed description of how it meets them.**

*Rationale: General Education courses help fulfill the University's educational objectives.*

**5. All courses designated for General Education credit at UW Oshkosh must include an assessment procedure designed to ensure that a course meets its specified Essential Learning Outcomes(s). The Faculty Senate committee on the Assessment of Student Learning (FACSL) will be responsible for approving the proposed assessment procedure.**

*Rationale: Assessment provides accountability for both the student and the organization. Additionally, increasing external pressure suggests the need to demonstrate that the University is achieving its educational objectives. The work of the LERT committee continues to enhance the understanding of the Essential Learning Outcomes and their assessment. As these are approved by University governance they need to be included in the General Education program.*

## **Communication (Speech)**

### **Definition:**

Communication (Speech) is the practice of public speaking. This practice involves constructing meaning and conveying information in public contexts.

### **Goals/Objectives:**

Communication (Speech) General Education should enable students to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for communication competence in diverse contexts.

Communication (Speech) competence includes the ability to construct or create persuasive, well-reasoned and ethical messages for specific audiences and purposes as well as the ability to critically analyze the communicative endeavors of others.

### **Criteria:**

In order to satisfy a Communication (Speech) general education requirement, a course must:

1. Include the development of oral communication skills, such as idea creation, format choice, audience analysis, argument or theme construction, and actual delivery to an audience.
2. Include the study of core concepts and theory as it pertains to public speaking; emanating from the discipline of communication and central to communication competence.

## Composition

**Definition:** Composition is the practice of writing. This practice involves the development of a recursive writing process centered on awareness of diverse rhetorical situations.

**Goals/Objectives:** The composition requirement has two distinct parts. The first-year writing requirement aims to help students improve their understanding and execution of writing, reading, thinking, and research as interrelated skills. The second requirement, Advanced Composition, aims to further develop these skills in the context of concrete problems, both within and outside of the academy.

**Criteria:** In order for a course to satisfy the first-year writing requirement, it must satisfy all of the following criteria\*:

1. The course must focus on writing process strategies; in other words, it should be designed to help students develop analytical writing skills and aptitude in critical editing and proofreading.
2. The course must emphasize collaborative work; in other words, it should consist largely of classroom activities other than traditional lecture, in which students engage theme-based questions through writing and discussion.
3. The course must stress synthesis of sources. Students must develop abilities in evaluating ideas and information from a variety of print and electronic sources.
4. Students must have opportunities to engage in outside research. (These opportunities need not necessarily be in the form of "research papers.")
5. At least 70% of the course grade must be based on writing assignments.

In order for a course to satisfy the Advanced Composition writing requirement, it must satisfy all of the following criteria\*\*:

1. The course must focus on rhetorical awareness, which entails gaining perspective on audience, purpose, and style.
2. Students must read from a variety of texts—which may include multiple genres and/or disciplines—that allow them to analyze and respond to other writers' arguments and ideas.
3. Students must practice argumentation that involves synthesis, organization, and evaluation of evidence and information from multiple sources.
4. The course must include practice of grammatical and stylistic conventions appropriate to diverse writing situations. It must also include instruction in accepted academic documentation style(s).
5. The course must require students to conduct research for at least one formal, in-depth writing assignment that includes gathering and evaluating a variety of print, electronic, visual, and/or oral materials.

\*Criteria are taken, with modification, from the online WBIS course criteria site ([www.english.uwosh.edu/wbis/criteria](http://www.english.uwosh.edu/wbis/criteria))

\*\*Criteria are taken, with modification, from the online Advanced Composition site ([www.english.uwosh.edu/AdvancedComp/](http://www.english.uwosh.edu/AdvancedComp/))

## **Ethnic Studies**

### **Definition:**

Ethnic Studies is the study of the histories, cultures and experiences of racial, ethnic and/or cultural groups in the United States.

### **Goals/Objectives:**

The Ethnic Studies general education requirement is intended to help students develop greater knowledge and understanding of, as well as greater empathy for, the different racial, ethnic and/or cultural groups constituting the United States. While Ethnic Studies courses make use of the methodologies appropriate to the specific disciplines in which they are developed, they nonetheless share a significant focus on the specific events and circumstances that have shaped the histories and practices of such groups.

### **Criteria:**

In order for a course to satisfy the Ethnic Studies general education requirement, the majority of the course must lead students to do one or more of the following:

- (a) Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the lived experience of individuals identified with the different racial, ethnic and/or cultural groups in the United States.
- (b) Analyze their own value system and how it is similar to or differs from value systems of people of different racial, ethnic and/or cultural groups in the United States.
- (c) Constructively respond to expressions or acts which devalue any racial or ethnic population(s).
- (d) Evaluate the psychological and social implications of prejudice, discrimination and ethnocentric bias on relationships among members of various racial and ethnic groups in American society.
- (e) Understand the persistence and significance of racial and ethnic pluralism in American society despite constant pressure for assimilation.
- (f) Examine the concept of "America" and "Americanism" by viewing these concepts through a multiethnic and multiracial rather than an ethnocentric lens.

## **Human Kinetics and Health Education**

### **Definition:**

Human Kinetics, the study and teaching of human movement, includes anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, exercise physiology, history and philosophy of sport. Professional preparation programs housed in Human Kinetics and Health Education departments often include athletic training, physical education teacher education, exercise science, adapted physical education, school health, community health and wellness promotion, and strength and conditioning.

### **Goals/Objectives:**

The goals of Human Kinetics and Health Education general education are to develop an understanding of the effects of lifestyle, wellness, and health promotion on the health of the individual, the procedures for self-evaluation and the development of an individualized wellness program.

### **Criteria:**

In order to satisfy a Human Kinetics and Health Education general education requirement, a course must address a primary objective/goal of Human Kinetics and Health Education that includes implementing a regular exercise program.

## **Humanities**

### **Definition:**

The Humanities examine the many ways in which human beings have lived, thought, and written about their lives. The Humanities are concerned primarily with questions of human value and morality; social and cultural development; creativity; the nature and development of human language; and the meaning of human life.

### **Goals/Objectives:**

The general education humanities requirement provides students with a framework for critically examining the world and the many ways in which human beings have lived, thought, and written about their lives.

### **Criteria:**

Typically, to be approved for Humanities credit, a course must meet one of the following criteria:

1. The course must introduce students to substantial and coherent bodies of cultural, literary, or philosophical knowledge or knowledge of religions as a means of increasing understanding of the human condition.
2. The course must enhance and extend the students' responses to literature, the arts, or modes of communication by introducing the process of thoughtful and systematic analysis, or by fostering an appreciation of diverse cultural achievements, or by increasing the students' sensitivity to language and its nuances.
3. The course must increase the students' understanding of and ability to assess the ways in which ethical or aesthetic values are manifested within diverse theoretical frameworks.
4. The course must increase the student's understanding of the language of the Arts in a diverse cultural and historical context and must include one or more of the following elements of the arts: creation, performance, history, theory or criticism.

## **Mathematics**

### **Definition:**

Mathematics is the logical study of structure and patterns. It can involve the use of inductive reasoning to recognize patterns and form conjectures and always involves deductive reasoning to draw conclusions.

### **Goals/Objectives:**

The general education Mathematics requirement seeks to allow students to develop problem-solving skills by having them take an active role in the problem-solving process. Students should come to understand that a “problem” is an unfamiliar situation where a solution may not be evident, and that being stuck is a natural part of problem solving and an essential impetus for original thinking. Students should develop the ability to distinguish problem solving and critical thinking from exercises and routine thinking, and to identify attitudes and beliefs that are conducive to success in challenging situations.

### **Criteria:**

In order for a course to satisfy a Mathematics general education requirement, the course should satisfy all of the following:

- (a) the course should involve activities designed to improve students’ ability to think logically and creatively solve problems
- (b) students should collect data, observe patterns, and/or make and verify conjectures
- (c) students should develop their ability to communicate mathematical ideas effectively, both orally and in writing
- (d) students in the course should learn to use and understand symbolic representations and quantitative methods
- (e) the course should introduce some of the principles of mathematics and the sciences.

## Natural Science

### **Definition:**

Natural Science is the study of the physical world and its laws. Topics of Natural Science such as matter and energy, planets and stars, evolution, living organisms, ecosystems, and natural processes of the Earth are studied using hypothesis development and testing, data collection and analysis.

### **Goals/Objectives:**

The goals of Natural Science general education are to develop an understanding of the interdependence of humankind and the natural world; to gain knowledge of the general principles of the Natural Sciences; and to have experience in the methods that are fundamental for acquisition of this knowledge.

### **Criteria:**

In order to satisfy a Natural Science general education requirement, a course must include all of the following:

- 1) introduce major concepts of a natural science discipline; give a “big picture” view of the discipline, usually including its connections to other disciplines
- 2) provide laboratory or field experience involving skills associated with the scientific method such as data collection and analysis; including limitations of the methodology.
- 3) include issues and ideas from the natural sciences that students are likely to encounter in popular culture or as active citizens in a democracy.

## **Non-Western Culture**

### **Definition:**

Non-Western Culture courses examine civilizations and traditions beyond the Western world. The majority of the content in these courses focuses on the values, institutions, and traditions of Non-Western regions, societies, or cultures.

### **Goals/Objectives:**

The Non-Western Culture general education requirement is intended to develop an understanding of the diversity of humanity beyond the West and to gain knowledge of traditions, culture and societies outside the Western tradition.

### **Criteria:**

In order to satisfy the Non-Western Culture general education requirement, a course must:

1. address as the primary topic a country, geographic region, or group of people whose primary cultural heritage is non-European; and
2. devote a majority of its content to the historical, cultural, political, economic, religious, philosophical, literary, artistic, intellectual or scientific achievements of a Non-Western society or societies.

## **Social Science General Education**

### **Definition:**

Social Science is the scientific study of the social world. Social science courses cover topics such as the continuity, change and patterns in institutional structures, authority, power, rules, culture, group associations, beliefs, individual choice, overt behavior, spatial analysis and mental function. These topics are studied systematically using quantitative and qualitative methods and rigorous standards of evidence and argument.

### **Goals/Objectives:**

The goals of Social Science General Education are to develop an understanding of the relationships between the individual or group and the various levels of human society, the forces that shape these relationships; to gain knowledge in specific areas of social science; and to develop an understanding of the methods of investigating these relationships and developing knowledge.

### **Criteria:**

In order to satisfy a Social Science General Education requirement, a course must:

1. Address a primary topic of the social sciences, and
  - a. Study the applied and/or theoretical dimensions of the topic using the quantitative and qualitative methods used in the social sciences, or
  - b. Analyze issues and ideas from a social science perspective that students are likely to encounter in the social world or as active citizens.