

OSRHE Policy & Procedures Manual

3.14.6 General Education Framework

This section seeks to identify the meaning and parameters of general education within the State System. 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 community colleges to the senior colleges and universities.

The general education program 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.

A. General Education Outcomes

The following framework is based on the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission Statement on General Education and should be followed by each institution when developing or reviewing its general education program.

All institutions in the State System will require a general education component in each undergraduate degree program. Faculty should provide the oversight for general education and each institution should regularly assess the effectiveness of its general education program. Institutions should clearly and publicly articulate the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of the general education provided to students.

An institution's general education program should impart common knowledge and intellectual concepts as well as help students develop skills and attitudes that every educated person should possess. Effective general education should help students gain competence in independent intellectual inquiry and also stimulate the examination and understanding of personal, social, and civic values.

The following student learning outcomes are a foundation for richer lives, careers, and citizenship. Institutions should strive to include each of these outcomes in general education programs:

1. Appreciating and understanding diverse cultures and heritages
2. Mastering multiple modes of inquiry, reasoning, and critical thinking
3. Effectively analyzing and communicating information
4. Recognizing the importance of creativity and values to the human spirit

5. Understanding relationships within nature and science
 6. Developing responsible, ethical, and engaged citizens
 7. Promoting lifelong learning, wellness and personal enrichment
 8. Adapting to a constantly changing global society
- Ideally, general education should extend throughout the students' baccalaureate programs. Institutions are encouraged to recognize the value of providing some type of upper-division general education experience during the final semesters of the baccalaureate degree program. It is also imperative that all institutions provide a means for credit by examination for established general education courses when individuals already have attained a college-level grasp of selected subject matter.

B. The General Education Core

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

1. Communication and Symbols

The goals of general education include a recognition that communication occurs through 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.

2. Social, Political, and Economic Institutions

The goals of general education include a recognition that human beings are participants in and creators of constantly changing social, political, and economic institutions. 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.

3. Understanding Relationships in Nature and Science

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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

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 a critical 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 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.

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 baccalaureate 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.

3.14.7 Inclusion of U.S. History and U.S. Government

All students graduating from institutions in the State System and 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. Each of these courses should be general in nature and taught by qualified faculty from the discipline department on campus. Specialized courses do not satisfy the intent of the policy.

Approved April 15, 1994; Revised April 3, 1998; June 30, 1998; October 15, 1999; April 7, 2000; April 1, 2004

(Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Academic Affairs, 135-137)