

## General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) Status and Actions AY 2016-2017

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### Executive Summary

Routine activities of the General Education Oversight Committee include: review of proposals to add courses to, delete courses from, and revise courses within, the General Education Curriculum; review of proposals to teach General Education courses during intensive session; fund innovative proposals in the General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition; assessment of whether the goals of General Education Curriculum components are met; and, consider whether selected courses within the curriculum are aligned with the University's criteria for General Education courses.

This year's report of the General Education Assessment Task Force has stimulated dialogue about General Education across the University and comprehensive consideration of the goals and structure of General Education. Proposals for changes in the General Education Curriculum, for instance to incorporate an environmental component, are seen on the horizon.

## **The General Education Curriculum and the General Education Oversight Committee**

The current General Education curriculum has been in place for more than a decade. Its genesis was the Taskforce on General Education Report of 2000, which launched a transformative faculty-led initiative aimed at creating a strong undergraduate curriculum across the University. This initiative was completed and approved in 2004 for the 2005-2006 academic year; since then, there have been only minor changes to the structure of the General Education Curriculum but considerable change in implementation. As set out in Senate By-Laws, Rules, and Regulations II.C.2. General Education Requirements, the curriculum consists of four content areas (Arts and Humanities; Social Sciences; Science and Technology; Diversity and Multiculturalism) and five competencies (Computer Technology, Writing, Quantitative Skills, Second Language Proficiency, and Information Literacy).

The General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) is formally a subcommittee of the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee. GEOC is charged with 1) setting the criteria for approving all course proposals for the Content and Competency Areas; 2) setting the criteria for entrance and exit requirements for the Competency Areas; 3) developing policy regarding the delivery of the University-wide General Education program; 4) reviewing and approving courses proposed for inclusion in the General Education Requirements; 5) determining the resources necessary to deliver the General Education Curriculum; 6) monitoring periodically courses that satisfy General Education Requirements to ensure that they continue to meet the criteria adopted by the Senate; and 7) reviewing the University-wide General Education program to ensure that its goals are being met and recommending changes to the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee when appropriate.

GEOC is a faculty committee. Voting members are chairs or co-chairs of eight GEOC Subcommittees, each corresponding to a content area or competency in the General Education curriculum. GEOC also has an undergraduate student member. Two non-voting ex-officio members of the GEOC represent the Quantitative Center and the Writing Center, which support student and faculty development in competencies identified as particularly crucial to the success of general education. A representative of the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee also serves as a non-voting ex-officio member of the GEOC. GEOC's current composition departs in several ways from that set out in Senate By-Laws on General Education (Senate By-Laws II.C.2.). There is presently no Computer Technology subcommittee nor is there an Assessment subcommittee; there is no graduate student representative.

## **The 2016 General Education Assessment Task Force**

### **Status**

A Task Force was convened in the 2015-2016 academic year, following a charge by the University Senate Executive Committee to the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee to

conduct an in-depth assessment of the University's current General Education system. The Executive Committee asked the Curricula and Courses Committee to address the following questions: 1) To what degree are the goals of the General Education program being met? 2) What is the long term impact of the General Education requirements? 3) Are the current goals for General Education requirements appropriate for the 21st century university? 4) Are revisions in goals needed? 5) Do the content areas as currently constructed meet the needs of our evolving society? 6) [Do any] content areas within GER need to be revised, deleted and/or [should any] content areas be added?

The task force performed analysis of peer and aspirant institutions, conducted focus groups of students and faculty, and disseminated online surveys to students, faculty and alumni. Their findings culminated in a set of recommendations that were modified into a resolution that was approved by the Senate in its meeting of 5 December 2016. The Senate charged the Curricula and Courses Committee to act on the report's recommendations by: 1) Doing a better job of communicating the values and the importance of general education to all constituencies involved, including students, faculty and advisors; 2) Developing a single landing site webpage devoted to general education; 3) Restating the broad goals of general education with clearer and more forceful language; 4) Investigating further the possibility of changing the general education requirements; 5) Seeking ways to address students' desire for training in life skills, while clearly distinguishing such training from the mission of general education. In the resolution, the Senate also urged the University to: 1) Establish a governing body for assessment at the university level; 2) Provide additional support to faculty who teach general education courses, including TA support for large lectures and resources on how to teach general education courses.

### **Actions 2016-2017**

GEOC has embarked on several initiatives in response to the Task Force Report and concomitant Senate recommendations. These are pushing forward on two fronts: there is a renewed effort to stimulate dialogue about General Education across the University, and first steps have been taken towards comprehensive consideration of the goals and structure of General Education.

The GEOC has initiated multiple lines of communication about General Education. The chair has met with student groups, especially Learning Communities (Nursing; Engineering; Ecohouse) and environmental groups (Sustainability Committee of the Undergraduate Student Government; Ecoalition). The discussions were guided by the findings of the Task Force, and structured around a set of questions: What would students see as a way to no longer organize GE as a perceived box check activity? Do students see GE outcomes/requirements as necessary/useful – if so, or if not – why? Another step towards communication this year has been representation of General Education at Open House for Prospective students and their families. At the open house, video content featuring faculty recipients of past Provost Competition grants and their classes was displayed. Such videos will be part of website content that is being developed towards the goal of communicating the purpose of General Education to current students, their families, and others with an interest in the University's academic program. Finally, the chair has resumed the practice of communicating with all faculty teaching

a General Education course at the beginning of each semester, reminding them of the goals of General Education and thanking them for their role in contributing to it.

Deeper consideration of the General Education curriculum and how its purpose is being communicated will occur as UConn participants attend the AAC&U Summer Institute on General Education and Assessment (IGEA 2017). A team of UConn participants has been accepted to this year's edition of this annual program. In addition to the GEOC chair, team members include Dr. Pamela Bedore, Associate Professor, Department of English and Chair of the CLAS Courses and Curriculum Committee; Dr. Lloyd Blanchard, Associate Vice Provost Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness; Dr. Daniel Burkey, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education and Diversity, School of Engineering; Dr. Hedley Freake, Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences; Dr. Thomas Meacham, Department of Dramatic Arts and Associate Dean, School of Fine Arts. The team's goals in attending IGEA 2017 include: 1) preparing models for revision of the general education curriculum; 2) developing ways to include new elements such as civility in discourse, environmental literacy, and life skills; 3) articulating assessable goals for the general education curriculum, including a greater emphasis on integration of content areas and competencies; 4) begin crafting a plan to communicate the goals of general education to all members of the university community.

## **Incorporation of an Environment Component into the General Education Curriculum**

### **Status**

Coincident with work of the 2015-2016 Task Force, a grassroots effort began to promote addition of an environmental component to the curriculum. The proposal to effect such an addition appeared as a motion to revise the General Education Rules and Regulations in the Senate meeting of 5 December 2016, the same meeting in which the Task Force's recommendations were approved. The Senate revised the motion to revise the Rules and Regulations, instead referring the matter to the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee with the charge that it "investigate ways of incorporating an environmental literacy requirement into the university's general education program."

### **Actions 2016-2017**

Proposals by which an environmental component can be incorporated into the General Education curriculum are under development and will be refined as part of participation in IGEA 2017. A complete proposal will be presented to the University in Fall 2017.

## **General Education in Senate By Laws, Rules, and Regulations**

### **Status**

Senate Rules and Regulations pertaining to GEOC (also referred to in prior annual reports, and posted on the GEOC website, as 'Guidelines') have undergone minor revisions since their approval in 2004. Some of the language is devoted to the initial implementation of the General Education Curriculum, and some concerns philosophy or principle rather than rules or regulations.

## **Actions 2016-2017**

GEOC is working on comprehensive revisions of Senate Rules and Regulations pertaining to General Education. Some of the changes reflect proposed changes in the structure of General Education. For example, last year's GEOC recommendations to delete the Computer Competency and revise the Information Literacy have not yet been reviewed by the Senate and will appear in the revision. Many of the changes are designed to streamline the Rules and Regulations, eliminating text that pertains to initial implementation and eliminating points of principle. Rather than expunging these points of principle from the record, they will be presented as Senate Policy. The revisions will be presented to the Senate in the 2017-2018 academic year.

## **Assessment of General Education components**

### **Status**

Components of the General Education curriculum (but not the curriculum as a whole) have been assessed to varying degrees. Assessment is conducted in a four-phase framework that was outlined in the GEOC Annual Report of 2009-2010. Briefly, assessment of the content area or competency begins with inquiry into whether key courses identify student learning outcomes that are aligned with general education goals, followed by communications with faculty and students, development of tools to assess learning outcomes, measurement of student learning based on classroom work in key courses, and concludes with dissemination of assessment tools to other courses and recommendations of changes to instruction based on assessment findings. Progress through the phases has not been uniform (see table 1 of Task Force report and associated text). Two content areas are at initial stages only; none have completed all four phases. In contrast, W courses have been subjected to rigorous assessment in selected academic programs (W task force, 2011; see also "Assessment of Student Writing in 1-Credit W Courses at UConn: Findings from Allied Health, Animal Science, Economics, and Nutritional Sciences", 2014).

## **Actions 2016-2017**

In 2016-2017, GEOC initiated assessment of the Q competency. The process is still within Phase I, in which key courses are being identified. GEOC is particularly interested in the Q competency courses that are taken by students whose majors are outside of quantitative fields of study, as these courses are viewed a crucial for providing students a framework for quantitative understanding they will not get in other courses they take at the University.

## **Course Additions, Revisions, Deletions**

### **Status**

The general education curriculum now contains 613 content area courses and 582 writing and quantitative competency courses (Table 1). Courses with CA4 and W designations have few 1000-level courses, and many 3000- and 4000-level courses, relative to other content areas or competencies. There continue to be relatively few 2000-level courses in any content area or competency.

Table 1. Numbers of courses now approved for the general education curriculum (as of April 3, 2017 Senate meeting). The table shows both current course totals for all content area and skill courses, as well as percentages for courses in those categories at the 1000- and 2000- level. Since some courses are included in more than one category, the totals are less than the sum of the individual categories.

Content Area/Competency	1000-level courses 2016-17	2000+level courses 2016-17	Total # of courses 2016-17	Percentage at 1000-level	Percentage at 2000-level
CA1 Arts & Humanities	106	36	219	48%	16%
CA2 Social Sciences	48	11	77	62%	14%
CA3 Science & Technology	31	7	38	82%	18%
CA3 Science & Technology – Lab	30	0	30	100%	0%
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism	29	14	125	23%	11%
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism – Int’l	52	20	124	42%	16%
<b>*Total content area courses</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Q Quantitative Competency	45	21	83	54%	25%
W Writing Competency	28	64	503	6%	13%
<b>**Total competency courses</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>15%</b>

\* totals are less than the sum of content area courses as some CA4 courses are also CA1, CA2 or CA3.

\*\* totals are less than the sum of skill courses as some courses are both Q and W.

### Actions 2016-2017

As of the end of March 2017 in AY 2016-2017, 76 proposals were received (18 more than last year). These proposals have so far resulted in the addition of 26 new courses to the curriculum, revision of 28 existing courses, and dropping of 3 courses (Table 2). Sixteen of the 76 proposals are still in the review process.

Table 2. Course additions, revisions and deletions.

Content Area/Competency	Additions	Revisions	Deletions
CA1 Arts & Humanities	10	1	0
CA2 Social Sciences	6	4	0
CA3 Science & Technology	0	0	0
CA3 Science & Technology – Lab	0	1	0
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism	4	4	0
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism – Int’l	7	4	1
Q Quantitative Competency	3	1	0
W Writing Competency	13	21	3

## **Intensive Session Offerings**

### **Status**

The GEOC reviews proposals to offer existing General Education courses in intensive sessions (4 weeks or less). Courses are approved either fully or provisionally, depending on the measure of assurance GEOC has that the General Education objectives of a given course can be maintained in the intensive course format. In the past, GEOC has collected faculty reports on provisionally approved intersession courses offered more than two times in a condensed format and used this information to determine whether a course should be re-categorized to “fully approved.” Over the past several years, the GEOC has been less inclined to issue provisional approvals but has instead opted for full approvals in all cases when appropriate; courses that are in question may simply be declined or sent back for revision. Since 2005, GEOC has approved 73 intensive session proposals, has given provisional approval to 6 proposals (1 of which has been granted full approval), and has rejected 8 proposals.

### **Actions 2016-2017**

In 2016-2017, GEOC approved 3 intensive session proposals.

## **General Education Course Substitutions**

### **Status**

According to the General Education Guidelines, schools and colleges have the explicit authority to make substitutions to the requirements for individual students admitted to the respective school or college. The Registrar’s office kindly supplies GEOC with a list of all substitutions made for enrolled students during the academic year. These numbers are relatively small compared to the total general education courses taken. (However, note that this does not account for a potentially large number of substitutions made for transfer students at the time of admission, for courses that are not a match of existing University of Connecticut courses). In the previous two academic years, the total number of substitutions was 176 (2015-2016) and 182 (2014-2015).

Another source of general education credits is through the Early College Experience (ECE) program. These are University of Connecticut courses taught by high school teachers throughout the State under the supervision of University departments. Numbers of ECE-related General Education substitutions are provided by the ECE program; they provide data on course substitutions granted for students matriculating to UConn in the Fall semester, for ECE courses during the year prior to their matriculation. Note that the limitation to ECE courses taken only in the previous year means that the effective number of General Education course substitutions is therefore greater than the data provided by ECE indicate. There are no W ECE substitutions. Over all content areas and the Q competency, there were 1493 and 1106 substitutions for the matriculating class of Fall 2015 and Fall 2014 respectively.

### **Actions 2016-2017**

In 2016-2017, 230 substitutions were granted by schools and colleges (Table 3). The greatest number of substitutions are granted in the second language competency.

Table 3. Category Substitutions by School or College 2016-17.

Sch/Col	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA3-L	CA4	CA4-Int'l	Q	W	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lang
ACES									2
AGHNR	9	5			12	15		2	6
BUSN	1		3	5	3	1			4
CLAS	2	2	1	12	2	4	8	2	23
CTED				2			3		4
EDUC	7	3		2	5	5	2		2
EGBU	1				1				1
ENGR	7	7			13	11			2
FNAR	3	1		1	6			9	3
NURS	1				3	1			
PHAR									
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>47</b>

Almost 2000 ECE substitutions were granted for the Fall 2016 cohort of students (Table 4). The number of ECE substitutions has climbed each year by one quarter to one third since 2014.

Table 4. ECE transfers into General Education – 2015-16 ECE Cohort admitted Fall 2016 at UConn.

Content Area/Competency	Substitutions
CA1 Arts & Humanities	202
CA2 Social Sciences	182
CA3 Science & Technology	96
CA3 Science & Technology – Lab	591
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism	6
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism – Int'l	13
Q Quantitative Competency	798
<b>Total</b>	<b>1888</b>

## General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition

### Status

The annual General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition (also known as the Provost's Competition) is designed to promote the ongoing enhancement, innovation, renewal, and academic rigor of the content and teaching of UConn's General Education curriculum. Since



2004, this grant program has tremendously enriched UConn's General Education program by positively encouraging the development of courses that support GEOC goals for continuous improvement and renewal of General Education. Due to the formation of the General Education Task Force and the review of the status of General Education at UConn, the competition to fund new courses was not held in 2015-2016.

### **Actions 2016-2017**

The grant program resumed this year with enhanced funding, so that each proposal could be funded up to \$7500. Four course proposals were awarded funding (Table 5).

Table 5. Recipients of General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition.

Proposer(s)	Course #	Course Title	General Education	New or Revised
Ladha	CLCS 1XXX	Introduction to Islam	CA1, CA4-INT	New
Orwicz	ARTH/HRTS 3575W	Human Rights, Digital Media and Visual Culture	CA1, W	Revised
Milvae	ANSC 1XXX	Human Reproductive Biology and Society	CA3	New
Brenick et al.	HDFS 3141	Developmental Approaches to Intergroup Relations and Victimization	CA2, CA4	Revised

## **General Education Course Alignment**

### **Status**

GEOC's charge includes "monitoring periodically courses that satisfy General Education requirements to ensure that they continue to meet the criteria adopted by the Senate". Given the large number of courses that comprise the General Education Curriculum, it is not possible for the GEOC to examine each course. It instead has developed a stratified sampling design, wherein courses are chosen within each subject area that is revisited on a six-year cycle. (Initially a five-year cycle was envisioned, but GEOC redesigned the plan this year in accommodating the large number of subject areas within the LCL department). Within each subject area, courses are selected by consultation between the GEOC and the department according to a combination of factors such as enrollments, content area and competency designations, and regional campus offerings. Details on the course selection process are described in earlier GEOC annual reports.

Information on each selected course is provided by the department. Information for every selected course includes instructional pattern, the professional rank of instructors, and at least a sample of recent syllabi. Additional information is submitted according to content area and/or

competency, so that the GEOC can assess whether the selected course continues to be consistent with the criteria for each component of the General Education Curriculum.

This monitoring process has multiple benefits that justify the resources of time and funds required. Over the years, GEOC acquires information on how well the components of the General Education Curriculum continue to follow the guidelines that have been set out for it. For departments, the process is an occasion to reconsider their General Education offerings, and frequently results in proposals to add, revise or delete courses. For this reason the process is referred to as an alignment. Historically, if a course is determined by the GEOC to not be aligned, no action is taken beyond identifying specific issues with the department, and notifying the University community.

### **Actions 2016-2017**

Seventeen courses were submitted for alignment this year (Table 6). As has been the case in recent years, the GEOC found that all content area and Q courses were aligned upon review of the material submitted by departments, but that some W courses do not align for various reasons. Subsequent to the first round of GEOC review, a revised syllabus was submitted for one of the non-aligned courses and the W subcommittee agreed that the course is now aligned.

Table 6. Courses reviewed for alignment.

Subject Area(s) <sup>1</sup>	Course Number	Course Title	Content Area and/or Competency	Aligns?
AH	1030	Interdisciplinary Approach to Obesity Prevention <sup>2</sup>	CA3	Y
AH	4240W	Writing for Allied Health Research	W	Y
ARAB	1122	Modern Arabic Culture	CA1, CA4	Y, Y
CAMS	1103	Classical Mythology	CA1	Y
CAMS	3242W	Greek and Roman Drama	W	N <sup>3</sup>
COGS	2201	Foundations of Cognitive Science	CA3	Y
COGS	4296W	Senior Thesis in Cognitive Science	W	N
COMM	1000	The Process of Communication	CA2	Y
COMM	2310W	Media Literacy and Criticism	W	Y
COMM	3000Q	Research Methods in Communication	Q	Y
ENVE	1000	Environmental Sustainability	CA2	Y
ENVE	4910W	Environmental Engineering Projects I	W	Y
FREN	1171	French Cinema	CA1, CA4	Y, Y
FREN	3270W	French Literature and Civilization in English	W	Y
KINS	3530W	Physiologic Assessment of Competitive Athletes	W	Y
LAND	3230W	Environmental Planning and Landscape Design	W	N
STAT	1100Q	Elementary Concepts of Statistics	Q	Y
STAT	3494W	Undergraduate Seminar II	W	N

<sup>1</sup> Several subject areas were due for alignment but submitted no courses for one of several reasons: 1) there were no eligible courses to review, 2) the GEOC Chair granted exemption because the department plans to delete or retire the course(s) selected, or 3) the department requested deferment until next year based on extenuating circumstances. These subject areas, not ordered according to the reasons listed, were BME, CSE, EPSY, HDFs, and MSE.

<sup>2</sup> Also offered as NUSC 1030

<sup>3</sup> Alignment completed after Senate report

**GEOC Committee Membership**

Name	Position
Joseph Abramo	CA4 co-chair
Michael Bradford	CA1 co-chair
Scott Campbell	Information Literacy co-chair
Baki Cetegen	TBA
Michael Darre	Senate C&CC
Ana Maria Diaz-Marcos	2nd Language co-chair
Steven DiBrino	Undergrad Representative
Arthur Engler	W competency co-chair
Bernard Goffinet	CA3 co-chair
David Gross	Q competency co-chair
Alvaro Lozano-Robledo	Q Center
Thomas Meyer	CA3 co-chair
Olivier Morand	CA2 co-chair
Michael Morrell	CA2 co-chair
Gustavo Nanclares	CA1 co-chair
Karen Piantek	Program Assistant
Eric Schultz	Chair
Fatma Selampinar	Q competency co-chair
Anji Seth	Info Lit co-chair
Kathleen Tonry	W competency Center
Eduardo Urios-Aparisi	CA4 co-chair
Manuela Wagner	2nd Language co-chair
Steven Zinn	W competency co-chair

**GEOC Subcommittee Members 2016-2017 Academic Year**

<p><b>CA1 Arts &amp; Humanities</b>  Michael Bradford, Co-Chair  Gustavo Nanclares, Co-Chair</p>	<p><b>Writing</b>  Arthur Engler, Co-Chair  Steven Zinn, Co-Chair  Douglas Kaufman  Thomas Long  Beth Ginsberg</p>
<p><b>CA2 Social Sciences</b>  Olivier Morand, Co-Chair  Michael Morrell, Co-Chair  David Atkin  Elizabeth Holzer  Kenneth Lachlan</p>	<p><b>Quantitative</b>  Fatma Selampinar, Co-Chair  David Gross, Co-Chair  Jennifer Tufts  James Cole  Kun Chen</p>
<p><b>CA3 Science &amp; Technology</b>  Tom Meyer, Co-chair  Bernard Goffinet, Co-Chair  David Perry  Richard Mancini</p>	<p><b>Information Literacy</b>  Scott Campbell, Co-Chair  Anji Seth, Co-Chair  Larry Gramling  Shelley Goldstein  Andrea Hubbard  Kathy Labadorf  Carolyn Lin</p>
<p><b>CA4 Diversity &amp; Multiculturalism</b>  Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, Co-Chair  Joseph Abramo, Co-Chair  Mary Ellen Junda  Mark Kohan</p>	<p><b>Second Language</b>  Ana Maria Diaz-Marcos, Co-Chair  Manuela Wagner, Co-Chair  Brian Boecherer  Rajeev Bansal</p>