

# **General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC)**

## **Status and Actions AY 2019-2020**

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## Executive Summary

The routine duties of the General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) include the following: review proposals to add courses to, delete courses from, and revise courses within, the General Education Curriculum; review proposals to teach General Education courses during intensive session; fund innovative proposals in the Provost's General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition; assess 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 AY year, the committee acted on 116 course proposals, funded five proposals for innovation in the curriculum, and considered whether 25 courses from twelve departments were aligned with the criteria for their component of the curriculum. All competency subcommittees reviewed their requirements and made various recommendations that are now being considered and discussed on GEOC.

GEOC continues to monitor the number of seats offered for Environmental Literacy to better understand the possible need for new EL courses. Chair Wagner coordinated conversations about possible synergies between work on the Delta 2 GE and LTE task forces and GEOC. Due to Covid-19, several planned actions had to be postponed or cancelled.

## Status

The current General Education curriculum has been in its present form for a decade and a half. 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. As set out in Senate By-Laws, Rules, and Regulations II.C.2. General Education Requirements (which were revised this year), the curriculum consists of four content areas (Arts and Humanities; Social Sciences; Science and Technology; Diversity and Multiculturalism) and five competencies (Writing, Quantitative Skills, Second Language Proficiency, and Information Literacy, and Environmental Literacy).

The General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) is formally a subcommittee of the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee. GEOC is charged with 1) proposing to the Senate goals and objectives of the Content Areas and Competencies; 2) proposing policy regarding the University-wide General Education program; 3) reviewing proposals for including, revising, deleting, and offering in intensive sessions of four weeks or less, courses that are in the General Education Curriculum; 4) reporting on enrollment in courses in the General Education Curriculum and how the courses are staffed; 5) monitoring courses in the General Education Curriculum to ensure that they continue to meet curricular goals and objectives approved by the Senate, and recommending removal of courses from the General Education Curriculum that no longer meet these criteria; and, 6) reviewing the General Education Curriculum to ensure that its goals and objectives are aligned with the academic plan of the University.

GEOC is a faculty committee. Voting members are typically assigned to be chairs or co-chairs of nine 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 can 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. During the AY 2019/2020 only the Writing Center was represented in meetings. Chair Wagner kept in touch with the Director of the Q Center, Amit Savkar, who was adjusting to his new role. Representation from the First Year Writing (FYW) Program was added two years ago, and was formalized in the Rules and Regulations under the previous chair. A representative from FYW was present at GEOC meetings due to her second role as co-chair of W. A representative of the Senate Curricula and Courses Committee also serves as a non-voting ex-officio member of the GEOC.

### **Actions 2019-2020**

Routine actions continued as in prior years. From April 16, 2019 to April 27, 2020, the committee acted on 116 course proposals (60 more than last year), funded five proposals for innovation in the curriculum, and considered whether 25 courses from 12 departments were aligned with the criteria for their component of the general education curriculum. Additionally, GEOC was asked to review the catalog copy for 29 courses that were previously listed in the catalog as hyphenated. The Office of the Registrar requested that departments provide a separate catalog copy for each course, and GEOC reviewed all of the courses carrying General Education designations.

Last year, under the leadership of Eric Schultz, then GEOC chair, an assessment of the Quantitative Literacy Competency was conducted by Eric Loken, Neag School of Education. This year, the committee received and discussed the assessment report based on structured interviews of instructors and teaching assistants of selected courses, focusing on introductory courses that are important for students in non-quantitative majors. More details will be provided below.

Since last year, GEOC has had an Environmental Literacy subcommittee that reviews course proposals for this new component of the General Education curriculum, and this committee has approved 45 new courses to help students fulfill this new General Education component.

In light of the First Year Writing (FYW) Program's transition to a new course, ENGL 1007, the question arose as to whether GEOC had oversight over FYW courses. A representative from FYW was previously added to the committee in an ex-officio role, but the question remained as to whether FYW was actually part of General Education or only related to it. While FYW courses are prerequisites to all W courses, they are not themselves considered W courses. On the other hand, FYW has typically been used to satisfy Information Literacy requirements, and the four credits of FYW appear to be included when calculating the 40 credits of General Education required by UCONN's original accrediting body, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). In consultation with the Senate Executive Committee (SEC), it was

determined that GEOC should review and provide oversight for FYW courses. The Senate By-laws were thus revised to clarify this matter.

Chair Wagner met with all subcommittee chairs in order to establish if there were any concerns and suggestions concerning each content area and competency. A conversation with the chair of Information Literacy made it clear that the Information Literacy criteria are currently out-of-date, and consequently the subcommittee overseeing them was inactive until just recently. In agreement with the SEC, GEOC convened a working group - led by Tom Scheinfeldt and Brenda Brueggemann - to review the current state of the Information Literacy Competency at UCONN and provide recommendations for further steps. Further information will be provided below.

As a curriculum review committee, GEOC has also periodically considered issues and policies related to both the General Education curriculum and course policy more broadly. While some topics are still under consideration, GEOC has discussed the following this year:

- Stream-lining of the course submission process
- Revision of the grade appeal policy
- Renumbering of experiential courses
- The dual degree credit change
- Environmental Literacy advising, waivers, and enrollment concerns
- Concerns over the Delta2GE report vote in the university senate
- Possible requirement that at least one W course should be in the English language
- Changing the W requirement from page length to word count
- Issues with W course instruction (i.e. “W course faculty drift”)
- CA4-INT credit for study abroad experience
- Gen Ed requirements for students with international degrees
- Education abroad course titles: “International Study” versus “Foreign Study”
- Requirement/recommendation to include Gen Ed goals and criteria in syllabi

Finally, GEOC remained closely engaged with the Delta2GE Task Force’s work toward revising the structure and content of General Education at the University.

## **General Education Course Portfolio**

### **Status**

As of April 2020, the General Education curriculum now contains approximately 749 content area courses and 619 writing, quantitative, and second language competency courses (Table 1). Additionally, 45 Environmental Literacy designations were added to the curriculum for a total of 57.

Courses with CA4 and W designations have few 1000- and 2000-level courses, and many 3000- and 4000-level courses, relative to other content areas or competencies. In the past, it was noted that there might be a need for 2000-level general education courses. This year, the number of 2000-level courses increased by 37 courses, most significantly in CA1 (from 65 to 73) and EL (from 6 to 57).

Table 1. Distribution of General Education courses as of the April 2020 University Senate meeting. Please note that entries in the table are current course totals for all content area and competency courses, as well as percentages for courses in those categories at the 1000- and 2000- level. The change from last AY 2018/19 this 2019/20 is indicated in parentheses. Number column totals exceed the number of courses in the curriculum because some courses have multiple designations.

Content Area/Competency	1000-level courses 2019-20	2000-level courses 2019-20	Total # of courses 2019-20	Percentage at 1000-level	Percentage at 2000-level
CA1 Arts & Humanities	112 (+2)	73 (+8)	274 (+15)	41% (-1)	27% (+2)
CA2 Social Sciences	45 (+2)	16 (+2)	97 (+8)	46% (-2)	16% (NC)
CA3 Science & Technology	29 (+2)	12 (+2)	45 (+5)	64% (-4)	27% (+3)
CA3 Science & Technology – Lab	33 (NC)	2 (+1)	35 (+1)	94% (-3)	6% (+3)
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism	32 (NC)	33 (+3)	158 (+3)	20% (-1)	21% (+2)
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism – Int'l	53 (+1)	25 (+3)	140 (+7)	38% (-1)	18% (+1)
<b>Total content area courses</b>	<b>304 (+7)</b>	<b>161 (+19)</b>	<b>749 (+39)</b>	<b>41% (-1)</b>	<b>21% (+1)</b>
Q Quantitative Competency	42 (NC)	23 (+1)	84 (+3)	50% (-2)	28% (+1)
Second Language	35 (NC)	0 (NC)	35 (NC)	100% (NC)	0% (NC)
W Writing Competency*	26 (+1)	79 (+3)	500 (+13)	5% (NC)	16% (NC)
<b>Total competency courses</b>	<b>103 (+1)</b>	<b>102 (+4)</b>	<b>619 (+17)</b>	<b>17 (NC)</b>	<b>16% (NC)</b>
E Environmental Literacy	13 (+9)	20 (+14)	57 (+45)	22% (-11)	35% (-15)

\*Includes ENGL 1007 from FYW

## Actions 2019-2020

As of the end of April in AY 2019-2020, GEOC received 136 course proposals (74 more than last year)\*. These proposals have thus far resulted in the addition of 59 new courses or new Gen Ed designations to the curriculum, the revision of 51 existing courses, six course deletions, and seven courses approved for intensive session offering (Table 2). Twenty-nine proposals, most of which were added to the docket in early April, are still in the GEOC review process, meaning that they are in one of the GEOC subcommittees. (*\*Note that some proposals may serve multiple functions, so the totals do not add to 136. A number of courses are usually also rolled over from the previous year due to the timing of receiving the requests.*)

In consultation with the former chair, GEOC changed its course review process. In the last few years the full GEOC looked at all proposals. We decided that after the chair pre-approves formal aspects of proposals, the proposals are immediately sent to the subcommittee. This sped up

the process. We also actively recruited sub-committee members in order to get help for committees where needed.

The large increase in course proposals this year is due at least in part to the addition of the Environmental Literacy (EL), as departments have been eager to submit courses to be approved for this new designation. Fifty-seven courses have been approved for EL in all, representing twenty-five subject areas (Table 4). EL courses are available at all UCONN campuses (Table 3) and are included in each component of the General Education curriculum, with the exception of Content Area 3 lab courses.

Table 2. General Education course additions, revisions and deletions approved by the Senate in AY 2019-2020. Number column totals exceed the number of courses in the curriculum because some courses have multiple designations. Note also that the totals include courses approved at the final University Senate meeting of Spring 2019 (4/29/19) that were not captured in the 2018-19 GEOC Annual Report.

Content Area/Competency	Additions	Revisions	Deletions	Intensive
CA1 Arts & Humanities	15	3	0	0
CA2 Social Sciences	8	7	0	4
CA3 Science & Technology	5	1	0	1
CA3 Science & Technology – Lab	1	1	0	0
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism	3	3	0	3
CA4 Diversity & Multiculturalism – Int'l	7	3	0	1
Q Quantitative Competency	3	1	0	0
W Writing Competency	19	18	6	0
Second Language*	0	8	0	0
E Environmental Literacy	45	1	0	3
TOTAL:	106	46	6	12

\*GEOC began reviewing Second Language (SL) courses in 2018-19.

From the first discussions about adding the EL component, there have been concerns about the University's capacity to provide a sufficient number of instructional 'seats' to meet the need. According to data reported in GEOC's annual report last year (AY 2018-2019), an average of more than 1600 students had enrolled in courses that, at the time, were approved for EL across all campuses over the previous three academic years. Table 4 provides a detailed breakdown of enrollment in currently approved EL courses across campuses for the 2019-2020 AY. A total of 3444 seats were filled across the university, 3141 at Storrs and 304 at the regional campuses together. The projected need had been about 4000 seats a year, currently about 556 short.

This raises concerns that the regional campuses might not have enough courses satisfying the EL requirement. We are therefore monitoring the situation closely. Chair Wagner engaged in regular meetings with Mansour Ndiaye, CLAS Assistant Dean for Advising and Enrollment Oversight and data showed that EL offerings are generally on track. Chair Wagner was also scheduled to visit the Stamford campus in March to discuss specific needs of the UCONN Stamford community. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, the visit had to be postponed indefinitely. In a meeting in the fall 2019 with the Brian Boecherer, Director of Early College Experience; Carol



Atkinson-Palombo, Associate Professor in Geography; and Morty Ortega, Associate Professor in Natural Resources and the Environment, online ECE courses and regular online courses which could serve to alleviate possible shortages were discussed. One EL-approved course is already offered for ECE credit: NRE 1000E. According to ECE, the course is offered in at least 65 high schools, and 88 instructors have been certified to teach the course. In AY 2019-2020, 172 students transferred this class for credit.

Table 3. Campuses at which Environmental Literacy courses will be taught. The number of courses that have been approved or are still under consideration are listed for each campus. Some courses are available at multiple campuses.

Courses by campus	Approved	In progress
Avery Point	18	4
Hartford	10	1
Stamford	7	1
Storrs	51	4
Waterbury	8	1

Table 4. Enrollment of students in existing courses that are approved for Environmental Literacy by campus. Entries are the sum of the number of students in EL courses for the past academic year. Storrs data is broken up into Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters. Regional campus data is compiled into one column each for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Subj	Numb	Title (Additional Content Areas & Competencies, if applicable)	Storrs Fall 2019	Storrs Spring 2020	AP 19-20	Hart 19-20	Stam 19-20	Wtby 19-20
AH	3175E	Environmental Health	58					
AMST	3542E	New England Environmental History						
ANTH	1010E	Global Climate Change and Human Societies (CA2, CA4-INT)	123	124				
ANTH	3340E	Culture and Conservation (CA2, CA4-INT)		20				
ARE	1110E	Population, Food and the Environment (CA2)	78	80				
ARE	3434E	Environmental and Resource Policy		65				
ARE	3437E	Marine Fisheries Economics and Policy						

ARE	4438E	Valuing the Environment		34				
ARE	4462E	Environmental and Resource Economics		22				
ECON	1107E	Honors Core: Economics, Nature, and the Environment						
ECON	2467E	Economics of the Oceans			16			
ECON	3466E	Environmental Economics						
EEB	2100E	Global Change Ecology (CA3)	77					
EEB	2208E	Introduction to Conservation Biology (CA3)		147		29		
EEB	2244E	General Ecology	99	88				
EEB	2244 WE	General Ecology	53	34				
EEB	3205E	Current Issues in Environmental Science (CA3)	14					
ENGL	2635E	Literature and the Environment (CA1)						
ENGL	3240E	American Nature Writing		26				
ENGL	3715E	Nature Writing Workshop	14	10				
ENVE	1000E	Environmental Sustainability (CA2)		90				
ENVE	2310E	Environmental Engineering Fundamentals	92	86				
EVST	1000E	Introduction to Environmental Studies (CA2)	148		7	36	7	8
EVST	3340E	Culture and Conservation (CA2, CA4-INT)						

GEOG	1300E	Weather, Climate and Environment (CA3)		124				
GEOG	2320E	Climate Change: Current Geographic Issues (CA2)	125					
GEOG	2400E	Introduction to Sustainable Cities (CA2, CA4-INT)	39	33		31		
GEOG	3410E	Human Modifications of Natural Environments		33				
GSCI	1000E	The Human Epoch: Living in the Anthropocene (CA3)		69				
HDFS	2142E	Exploring Conservation and Sustainability with Preschoolers						
HIST	2210E	History of the Ocean (CA1)						
HIST	2222E	Global Environmental History (CA1, CA4-INT)						
HIST	3540E	Environmental History of the Americas (CA1, CA4)						
HIST	3540 WE	Environmental History of the Americas (CA1, CA4, W)	38					
HIST	3542E	New England Environmental History		35				
JOUR	3046E	Environmental Journalism	10					
LAND	2210E	Common (Shared) Landscape of the USA: Rights, Responsibilities & Values (CA1)	41			36		
LAND	3230 WE	Sustainable Environmental Planning and Landscape Design		13				
MARN	1001E	The Sea Around Us (CA3)	36	59	4			

MARN	2801 WE	Marine Sciences and Society (W)		2	16			
MARN	3000E	The Oceans and Global Climate (CA3)		28	3			
MAST	1001E	The Sea Around Us (CA3)			6			
MAST	2210E	History of the Ocean (CA1)			14			
MAST	2467E	Economics of the Oceans			1			
NRE	1000E	Environmental Science (CA3)	193	200	14			34
NRE	1235E	Environmental Conservation (CA1)		77				
NRE	2215E	Introduction to Water Resources		44				
NRE	2600E	Global Sustainable Natural Resources (CA4- INT)		73				
NURS	4250E	Public Health Nursing						
PHAR	1001E	Toxic Chemicals and Health (CA3)		143				
PHIL	3216E	Environmental Ethics		28				
PHIL	3216 WE	Environmental Ethics (W)						
PHYS	1040Q E	Cosmic Origins of Life (CA3, Q)	47				41	
POLS	3240E	Environmental and Climate Justice (CA2)		30				
PSYC	3104E	Environmental Psychology						
SPSS	2100E	Environmental Sustainability of Food Production in Developed Countries	39					
SPSS	2500E	Principles and Concepts of Agroecology		30				

<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1324</b>	<b>1847</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>42</b>
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On a final note, GEOC has agreed that archived or inactive courses that have not been taught for five years or more do not need to be listed as part of the General Education course list in advising audit sheets or on the website.

## **Intensive Session Offerings**

### **Status**

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 used to collect 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, 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 83 intensive session proposals, has given provisional approval to 7 proposals (1 of which has since been granted full approval), and has rejected 8 proposals.

### **Actions 2019-2020**

GEOC approved the following courses for intensive session offering:

- ☐ ECON 3466E Environmental Economics (EL)
- ☐ EDLR 2001 Contemporary Social Issues in Sport (CA4)
- ☐ EPSY 1830 Critical and Creative Thinking in the Movies (CA2)
- ☐ GEOG 2400 Introduction to Sustainable Cities (CA2, CA4-INT, EL)
- ☐ GSCI 1000E The Human Epoch: Living in the Anthropocene (CA3, EL)
- ☐ SOCI 2310 Introduction to Criminal Justice (CA2, CA4)
- ☐ SOCI/LLAS 3525 Latino Sociology (CA2, CA4)

## **General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition**

### **Status**

The annual Provost’s 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’s

goals for continuous improvement and renewal of General Education. In 2016/17 the maximum award was adjusted upwards to \$7500. The competition has also changed from a two-year grant to a one-year potentially-renewable grant, partially due to concerns about encumbering money in future fiscal years, and partially to allow GEOC to assess the progress of awardees before additional funds are offered. Proposals are reviewed by a panel of faculty and representatives from GEOC subcommittees, the Instructional Design and Development Group in the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, and a pool of previous competition winners.

### Actions 2019-2020

In light of the university's efforts to create a new general education curriculum and to address areas in need of additional courses, GEOC solicited in the call for proposals courses that enhanced offerings in the areas of W, Q, and EL; that emphasized integrative learning or incorporated high-impact practices; or that were developed and/or taught in interdisciplinary collaboration, but all proposals were considered equally and ultimately funded based on their merit.

Fifteen proposals were submitted (seven more than last year) of which five were awarded funding (Table 8). Proposals came from 13 different departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the School of Fine Arts.

Table 8. Recipients of 2019-2020 General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition funds

Proposer(s)	Course #	Course Title	General Education	New or Revised Course	New funds or renewal
César Abadía-Barrero	HRTS 2XXXW	Human Rights and Social Movements	CA2, CA4, W	New	New
Peter C. Baldwin	HIST 2XXXW	History of Technology in America	CA1, CA3, W	New	New
Thomas Bontly	PHIL 3XXX	Philosophical Issues in Global Climate Change	EL	New	New
Anke Finger	CLCS 2XXX	Media Literacy and Data Ethics(LCL)	CA1, CA4	New	New
Mitchell Green	PHIL 110X	Philosophy and the Environment	CA1, EL	New	New

## 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 finally the 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 (General Education Assessment Task Force 2016). Two content areas are at initial stages only; none have completed all four phases. By contrast, W courses have been subjected to rigorous assessment in selected academic programs (W Course Taskforce 2011, Deans 2014).

### Actions 2019-2020

In 2017-2018, GEOC initiated assessment of the Q competency. GEOC is particularly interested in the Q competency courses that enroll a high number of students outside of STEM fields. For such students, these courses provide unique opportunities for quantitative reasoning. A Q Competency Assessment group identified a list of six key courses to evaluate in the initial phase of assessment: CHEM 1127Q, COMM 3000Q, LING 2010Q, MATH 1070Q, PHYS 1010Q, and STAT 1000Q. The expertise of Eric Loken (EPSY) was secured, and he conducted interviews with instructors and teaching assistants of these courses, at Storrs and regional campuses, asking how instructors of Q courses understood the goals of the Q component and how it related to their course design, assignments and interactions with students. Loken submitted a report of his work to Chair Wagner in November 2019. The report was then reviewed by the Q subcommittee which in turn submitted a report to GEOC. Below is an excerpt of the report summarizing the Q subcommittee's recommendations, which continue to be discussed on GEOC.

- (1) In order to raise awareness of the Q criteria among both instructors and students, we strongly suggest that instructors of Q courses include the Q criteria in their course syllabi.
- (2) In order to raise students' awareness of resources that are available to support their learning, we strongly suggest that instructors of Q course include information about the Q Center and other relevant resources in their course syllabi.

- (3) Students with “math anxiety” may be in particular need of support. The Q Center might offer such services (such as training or counseling) with the support of GEOC. In principle, the Q center offers support with all of the fundamental Q courses in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Statistics. The Q center offers one-on-one tutoring, but the Q Center tutoring is meant to support in-class learning and instruction. Currently they do not have the staff or resources to specifically address the problem of math anxiety.
- (4) Suggest the instructor to add optional questions regarding whether the course achieves the Q learning objectives in the Student Teaching Evaluation Form. This aims to collect student feedback, which is important but completely lacking in the current assessment report. We ask GEOC to consider how to best implement this and how to collect and utilize the information. This may apply to other designations. Alternatively, GEOC can periodically carry out a survey of such courses with the help of CETL and UITS to gather the information.
- (5) Although the committee does not feel that a major revision of the Q criteria is necessary at this time, we believe it may be necessary to revisit the issue of the balance between “hand calculations” and the use of software in Q courses, particularly with the rise of big data and artificial intelligence. We will look into this issue. “

GEOC is currently considering their final recommendation regarding the possible changes to the Q requirements. Due to Covid-19, this conversation will need to be continued in the fall.

The Information Literacy (IL) Competency is perhaps the one most in need of revision. Therefore, Tom Scheinfeldt, current chair of the IL subcommittee, convened and co-chaired a working group with the incoming IL subcommittee co-chair, Brenda Brueggemann, to come up with preliminary recommendations concerning the role of IL at UCONN. Currently, students are exposed to IL as part of First-Year Writing courses in collaboration with the staff of the University Libraries. Additionally, each department has the responsibility for articulating a plan for the advanced IL instruction that is reflected in this coursework. These departmental plans, most of which were adopted well over a decade ago, have only rarely been updated and oversight of the IL component has been limited in recent years. According to the working group “teaching students how to locate, understand, evaluate, and synthesize the sheer volume of information available to them within and across academic fields, as well the information that appears on social media and other media outlets, has become especially important in our information-saturated culture.” The report describes how UConn’s current approach to information literacy has lacked in rigor. The working group therefore outlined different options of how IL, in a more complex form integrating Digital, Information, and Media Literacy, could be integrated in the UCONN general education curriculum. One option would be to create a new “L” course requirement within the general education curriculum; another possibility would be to incorporate IL within the requirements for the other four existing GEOC



competencies (e.g. Quantitative, Second Language, Writing, and Environmental); a third option would be to incorporate IL within the requirements for the existing GEOC content areas. The working group concluded that removing IL from the general education curriculum and GEOC's purview altogether and leaving it up to individual departments to teach IL was a final option. Upon reading the report, the SEC charged GEOC to come up with recommendations vis á vis the different options outlined in the report. In its last meeting, on April 27, GEOC voted (7 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 abstention) on the following motion: "GEOC moves that we make IDML a competency on a par with Q, W, and (upcoming) E courses ; to wit, introduce a new designation (say, 'L') for IDML. We recommend allowing for the possibility of courses to carry other designations." (Note that IDML stands for Information, Digital , and Media Literacy).

Former GEOC Chair Schultz charged the former the Second Language (SL) Competency subcommittee chairs, Chunsheng Yang and Manuela Wagner, to work together with departments offering the courses fulfilling the SL competency requirement to come up with SL Student Learning Goals. That work was delayed last year and therefore continued this year under the leadership of the current Second Language (SL) Competency subcommittee chair, Eduardo Urios-Aparisi.

The Second Language Competency Learning Goals accepted (10 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstention) during the GEOC meeting on April 27 are:

- Respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; ask formulaic questions, and negotiate meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases in the second language, as befitting a novice high level of competency according to the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language (ACTFL);
- Show sensitivity toward and awareness of cultural differences;
- Show awareness of similarities between the first and second languages;
- Use the language to make connections and comparisons with other languages and cultures, past and present; and
- Use the language to broaden and deepen perspectives on major courses of study, career goals, and world events.

Additionally, the working group worked on updating the language describing the role of language and culture in general education.

## **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 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 two years ago to accommodate an increasing number of subject areas, and particularly the large number of subject areas within the LCL department). Within each subject area, courses are selected by consultation between 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 Appendix A.

Information on each selected course is provided by the department and includes instructional patterns, 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 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 has acquired 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 GEOC to not be aligned, no action is taken beyond identifying specific issues with the department, and notifying the University community. A change to the By-Laws last year, however, now allows GEOC to strip a course of its Gen Ed designation if the course cannot be brought into alignment with the help of the department.

**Actions 2019-2020**

Twenty-five courses from twelve departments were submitted for alignment this year (Table 9). As has been the case in recent years, GEOC found that all content area courses were aligned upon review of the material submitted by departments, but that some W courses did not align for various reasons, mainly having to do with specific items missing from the syllabus/i. One Q course was also found to be out of alignment. (*\*Please note that communication with the respective departments has just started.*)

Table 9. Courses reviewed for alignment.

Subject Area(s) <sup>1</sup>	Course Number	Course Title	Content Area and/or	Aligns?
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			Compete ncy	
ARE	3261W	Writing in Food Policy	W	Y
ARTH	1138	Introduction to Art History: 15 <sup>th</sup> Century- Present	CA1	Y
ARTH	3560W	History of Photography: World War I- Present	W	N
ENGL	1616/W	Major Works of English & American Literature	CA1, W	Y, Y
ENGL	3218	Ethnic Literature of United States	CA4	Y
HIST	1203	Women in History	CA1, CA4	Y, Y
HIST	1502	U.S. History Since 1877	CA1	Y
HIST	3101W	History Through Fiction	W	N
LING	1010	Language and Mind	CA1	Y
LING	2010Q	The Science of Linguistics	CA3, Q	Y, Y
LING	3610W	Language and Culture	CA2, CA4- INT, W	Y, Y, Y
MUSI	1003	Popular Music and Diversity in American Society	CA1, CA4	Y, Y
MUSI	3371Q	Twentieth Century Theory and Analysis	Q	N
MUSI	3410W	Music, History, and Ideas	W	N
NURS	2175	Global Politics of Childbearing & Reproduction	CA1, CA4- INT	Y, Y
NURS	3715W	Nursing Leadership	W	N
NUSC	1167	Food, Culture, and Society	CA4-INT	Y
NUSC	1645	The Science of Food	CA3	Y
NUSC	4296W	Senior Thesis in Nutrition	W	Y
PHYS	1501Q	Physics for Engineers I	CA3-LAB, Q	Y, Y
PHYS	4096W	Research Thesis in Physics	W	P
PP	1001	Introduction to Public Policy	CA2	Y
PP	3020W	Cases in Public Policy	W	P
PVP	3094W	Seminar	W	N
WGSS	3253/W	Gender Representations in U.S. Popular Culture	CA2, W	Y

Key: Y = Yes, N = No, P = Partial Alignment, needs slight revision

\*NOTE: Several subject areas were due for alignment but submitted no courses for one of two reasons: 1) there were no eligible courses to review (AIRF & MISI), or 2) the department requested deferment until next year based on extenuating circumstances (GSCI & PHAR). MUSI was aligned this year after having deferred alignment last year.

## **General Education Course Substitutions, Transfers, and Adjustments**

### **Status**

There are two processes for reviewing and approving substitutions for General Education courses. Most substitutions are made at the School or College level. Of these, most are for transfer students who completed coursework at their previous institution or abroad. General Education credits in these cases are carried in a generic course code. The Registrar's office kindly supplies GEOC with a list of all substitutions made for enrolled students during the academic year.

The remainder of the substitutions are made at the University level through the Academic Adjustments Committee, for students with a significant disability whose documentation and educational history provide compelling evidence of an inability to complete graduation expectations. In 2006 the university adopted a policy on academic adjustments for general education competencies, specifically Quantitative Reasoning and Second Language. Under this policy, academic adjustments are granted only when it is clear that the completion of the requirement is impossible due to a disability. Waivers of General Education Competencies are never granted. Academic adjustments, which may include course substitutions, are granted on a case-by-case basis.

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. Data include course substitutions granted for students matriculating to UConn in the Fall semester, for ECE courses taken during the year prior to their matriculation. There are no W ECE substitutions.

### **Actions 2019-2020**

After peaking at 230 course substitutions in 2016-2017, only 149 substitutions were granted by schools and colleges in 2017-2018, and they continued to decline again with a total of 107 substitutions last year and 106 this year (Table 10). Overall, CA4, CA4-Int, and Second Language account for the highest number of substitutions; notably CLAS does not allow CA4/CA4-INT substitutions, or this number might be even higher. Compared to last year, Q substitutions doubled from four to eight, but Second Language substitutions were down by more than a third. Twenty substitutions were granted by the Academic Adjustments Committee (Table 11).

Table 10. Category Substitutions by School or College 2019-20.

Sch/Col	CA1	CA2	CA3	CA3-L	CA4	CA4-Int'l	Q	W	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lang	Total
ACES										0
AGHNR	3				2	5		1	3	14
BUSN				1	5	1				7
CLAS				4			5		14	23
CTED			1	1	1	2			5	10
EDUC	1	1		2	2	5				11
EGBU										0
ENGR	4	3			9	6		2		24
FNAR	2			3		1	3			9
NURS					2	2				4
PHAR	2							2		4
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>106</b>

Table 11. Academic Adjustments.

Competency	Sought 2017-18	Denied 2017-18	Sought 2018-19	Denied 2018-19	Sought 2019-20	Denied 2019-20
Quantitative	4	1	5	2	4	1
Second Language	19	0	19	2	16	2

Students matriculating at UConn in 2019-2020 used 4,559 ECE course enrollments from their studies the previous year towards their General Education requirements (Table 12). These numbers have steadily increased from previous years, as there were 3,732 such substitutions for the Fall 2018 and 1,773 for the Fall 2017 matriculating classes\*. (*\*Note: The numbers were misreported in the 2018-2019 report.*)

Director of ECE, Brian Boecherer, explained the data as follows:

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the trend lines are going up despite the fact that the overall numbers of UConn ECE students and those matriculating to UConn after high school are relatively flat. I believe this speaks to our effort to diversify course offerings for students who wish to take a course based on interest and motivation, as opposed to those courses where a student needs to be tracked into that course. Examples of such “open access” courses are: ECON 1000, CAMS 1003, and HRTS 1007. NRE 1000 continues to be a very popular course, which now supports the completion of two content areas, which also increases the number of GEOC exceptions.

Table 12. ECE transfers into General Education, 2011-Present

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2011-2020 Sparkline
CA1	253	200	205	147	227	202	194	736	942	
CA2	106	147	128	62	118	182	167	303	409	
CA3	64	87	89	39	63	96	104	152	190	
CA3-LAB	476	458	594	369	495	591	565	982	1,291	
CA4	14	8	4	7	10	6	21	89	86	
CA4-INTL	8	15	8	6	19	13	24	82	122	
ENVIRO								140	172	
<b>Content Area Total</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>1,028</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>932</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>1,075</b>	<b>2,484</b>	<b>3,212</b>	
Q	589	810	760	476	561	798	698	1,248	1,347	
W	43	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Competency Total</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>1,248</b>	<b>1,347</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,553</b>	<b>1,751</b>	<b>1,788</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>1,493</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>1,773</b>	<b>3,732</b>	<b>4,559</b>	

## Communication about the value of the General Education Curriculum and plans to change its structure and goals

### 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. 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.

From 2017-2019, the Delta Gen Ed Task Force, empaneled by the Senate, considered the General Education curriculum and how its purpose is being communicated. In April 2019, the Delta Gen Ed Task Force presented a report to the Senate. On April 29, 2019 the Senate accepted "the DeltaGenEd Task Force report and its vision for a new curriculum. The Senate C&C further recommends that the SEC empanel a Delta2GenEd Task Force in 2019/20 to refine components of the proposed curriculum and to prepare an implementation plan" ([Senate Minutes 4-29-19](#)). The Delta2GenEd Task Force is co-chaired by a continuing member of the Delta Gen Ed Task Force and GEOC Chair Wagner. At the same time, through the presidential

initiative on Life-Transformative Education (LTE), led by Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, John Volin, the LTE Task Force was formed. The task force includes “a team of visionary leaders from all levels of the university with the ultimate goal to make life-transformative education the foundation of UConn’s educational philosophy by creating grassroots, bottom-up change with institutional support” ([Life-transformative Education, UCONN, n.d.](#)). Chair Wagner is a member of the LTE Task Force.

## **Actions 2019-2020**

GEOC engaged in several activities in support of the Senate recommendations.

The above-mentioned Provost’s General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition is certainly one of the most effective examples of creating awareness of the value of general education. Over the years, the Provost Competition has encouraged and enabled colleagues to think about general education in creative and innovative ways which resulted in numerous cutting-edge additions to and enhancements of existing courses in the UCONN General Education Curriculum.

Chair Wagner met with the various subcommittee co-chairs in order to determine and address the varied needs of the subcommittees. As a result and as discussed above, GEOC created a working group to investigate the role of Information Literacy in General Education at UCONN. The W subcommittee considered the creation of recommendations concerning the training of graduate students who teach W courses. The role of FYW was discussed and FYW courses are now officially under GEOC’s oversight. The Second Language Competency Subcommittee, together with departments that teach language and culture courses, designed Second Language Competency Learning Goals. The Q subcommittee considers whether there should be changes to the Q requirement in addition to their recommendations with regard to improving the communication of the current requirement. GEOC continues to update the webpage in order to communicate GEOC matters to the community more clearly. We also continuously engage in conversations on how to streamline and clarify the CAR process with regard to General Education.

On March 9, Chair Wagner presented on the value of general education to the Orientation Leaders-in-Training. Based on feedback from Maria Sedotti, Director of the Storrs Orientation Services, this could be an opportunity to reach students before they arrive at UCONN to discuss general education from a complex perspective. Spending time with Orientation leaders, many of whom were first-year students, also provided valuable information for areas that can be addressed in future meetings with students.

Chair Wagner coordinated the flow of pertinent information between GEOC, the Delta2GenEd Task Force, and the LTE Task Force in order to allow for possible synergies. Possible cross-pollinations of ideas are likely in discussions of a) the value and importance of general education; b) cutting edge approaches to teaching and learning; c) examples of best practices at UCONN and at other institutions, d) and findings from student interviews and focus groups concerning experiences they considered to be life-transformative. To explain the last point, the Best Practices Working Group, co-chaired by two members of the LTE Task Force, planned to

conduct surveys with students to find out more about which experiences students considered life-transformative. That information will also be valuable and can influence decisions on GEOC and on the Delta 2 GE Task Force.

### **Actions 2019-2020 prevented by Covid-19**

Some initiatives that were planned before Covid-19 had to be delayed, postponed, or canceled. For example, as part of the bigger goal to foster communication, inclusion, and support of regional campuses, Chair Wagner was scheduled to visit the Stamford campus to meet with administrators, faculty, staff, and students to discuss the specific needs of the UCONN Stamford community regarding general education. That visit and other plans to visit additional regional campuses had to be postponed indefinitely.

GEOC was also in communication with Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs, John Volin, and the Senate Executive Committee to determine activities at UCONN that would promote the value of general education to the UCONN community. Such initiatives were not deemed possible anymore due to restrictions caused by Covid-19.

In past years, GEOC representatives participated in conferences on general education, which was impossible this year due to understandable travel restrictions.

Another idea to support new general education courses was to use the remaining funds in the GEOC budget to fund two more proposals that were submitted to this year's Provost's General Education Course Enhancement Grant Competition and were close contenders for the winning proposals. In the end, the decision was made to return the unused funds to the University to help alleviate projected deficits caused by Covid-19.

Unfortunately, the crisis related to Covid-19 also delayed some of the synergies of the Delta 2 GE, LTE Task Forces with GEOC envisioned for this year because several of the activities on each of the committees had to be postponed or canceled.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

In conclusion, General Education at UCONN finds itself in an interesting phase in which the established curriculum requires oversight while a new General Education curriculum is in the process of being designed. Signs of the general health of General Education at UCONN can be seen in the a) rigor and enthusiasm with which the GEOC fulfills its regular duties while also being interested and engaged in providing feedback on the new curriculum, b) high number of new general course proposals, and c) high number of proposals submitted to the Provost's General Education Course Enhancement Grant.

GEOC acknowledges that while the current crisis related to Covid-19 poses challenges for the entire university special attention will have to be paid to how general education courses can be continued to be delivered effectively. GEOC will participate in conversations to address this challenge as swiftly as possible.



GEOC is grateful for the fruitful collaboration with the UCONN administration and the Senate Executive Committee as well as to the UCONN community for their support and engagement.

Many thanks to Miguel Gomes, Mary Ellen Junda, Jason Irizarry, and Michael Morrell, who provided immensely valuable input to GEOC and are now rotating off of this committee.

GEOC is tremendously indebted to Karen Piantek McDermott for her outstanding administrative support and for sharing her exceptional competence.

Respectfully submitted, 4/27/2020

Manuela Wagner

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## GEOC Committee Membership, 2019-2020 Academic Year

Name	Position
Manuela Wagner	GEOC Chair
Fabrice Baudoin	Q Competency Co-Chair
Pamela Bedore	Senate Curricula & Courses (Ex-Officio)(Fall)
Eric Schultz	Senate Curricula & Courses (Ex-Officio)(Spring)
Lisa Blansett	W Competency Co-Chair
Kun Chen	Q Competency Co-Chair
Robert Day	CA2 Co-Chair (Fall)
Kelly Dennis	CA1 Co-Chair
George Gibson	CA3 Co-Chair
Beth Ginsberg	W Competency Co-Chair
Ali Gokirmak	CA3 Co-Chair
Miguel Gomes	CA1 Co-Chair
Jason Irizarry	CA4 Co-Chair (Fall)
Mary Ellen Junda	CA4 Co-Chair
Suman Majumdar	Q Competency Co-Chair
Olivier Morand	CA2 Co-Chair
Michael Morrell	CA2 Co-Chair (Spring)
Tom Scheinfeldt	Information Literacy Co-Chair
Kathleen Tonry	E Literacy Co-Chair
Eduardo Urios-Aparisi	SL Competency Chair
Jason Vokoun	E Literacy Co-Chair
Karen C. P. McDermott	Admin: Program Assistant

## GEOC Subcommittee Membership, 2019-2020 Academic Year

<p><b>CA1 Arts &amp; Humanities</b>  Miguel Gomes (LCL), Co-Chair  Kelly Dennis (ART &amp; ARTH), Co-Chair  Dwight Codr (ENGL)  Polya Tocheva (Law Library)</p>	<p><b>Writing</b>  Beth Ginsberg (POLS), Co-Chair  Lisa Blansett (ENGL), Co-Chair  Douglas Kaufman (EDCI)  Jason Courtmanche (ENGL)  Renee Gilberti (ISS/McNair)  Challa Kumar (CHEM)  Natalia Smirnova (ECON)</p>
<p><b>CA2 Social Sciences</b>  Olivier Morand (ECON), Co-Chair  Robert Day (BUSN), Co-Chair  Michael Morrell (POLS), Co-Chair  David Atkin (COMM)  Kenneth Lachlan (COMM)</p>	<p><b>Quantitative</b>  Kun Chen (STAT), Co-Chair  Fabrice Baudoin (MATH), Co-Chair  Suman Majumdar (STAT)  Jennifer Tufts (SLHS)</p>
<p><b>CA3 Science &amp; Technology</b>  George Gibson (PHYS), Co-Chair  Ali Gokirmak (ECE), Co-Chair  Richard Mancini (ANSC)  David Perry (PHYS)  Peter Schweitzer (PHYS)</p>	<p><b>Information Literacy</b>  Tom Scheinfeldt (DMD), Co-Chair  Co-Chair TBD  Lisa Blansett (ENGL)  Jonathan Moore (BUSN)  Marcus Rossberg (PHIL)  Anke Finger (LCL)</p>
<p><b>CA4 Diversity &amp; Multiculturalism</b>  Mary Ellen Junda (MUSI), Co-Chair  Jason Irizarry (EDLR), Co-Chair (Fall)  Anne Borsai Basaran (COMM)  Trudi Bird (ENGL)  Alana Adams (Business Advising)</p>	<p><b>Second Language</b>  Eduardo Urios-Aparisi (LCL), Co-Chair  Co-Chair, TBD  Brian Boecherer (Early College Experience)  Rajeev Bansal (ECE)</p>
<p><b>Environmental Literacy (NEW)</b>  Kathleen Tonry (ENGL), Co-Chair  Jason Vokoun (NRE), Co-Chair  Janet Pritchard (ART &amp; ARTH)  Annelie Skoog (MARN)  Marina Astitha (CE)  Christopher Elphick (EEB)  Syma Ebbin (ARE)</p>	<p><b>Digital/Information Working Group</b>  Tom Scheinfeldt (DMD), Co-Chair  Brenda Bruggeman (ENGL), Co-Chair  Lisa Blansett (ENGL)  Scott Campbell (ENGL)  Ellen Carillo (ENGL)  Anke Finger (LCL)  Sara Harrington, University Library  Oliver Hiob-Bansal (ENGL)  Jonathan Moore (OPIM)</p>

	Marcus Rossberg (PHIL) Marie Shanahan (JOUR) Stephen Slota (EPSY) Stephen Stifano (COMM) Matt Worwood (DMD)
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## Provost's Competition Selection Committee

<p><b>Manuela Wagner</b>, GEOC Chair, LCL</p> <p><b>Renee Gilberti</b>, McNair Scholars Program</p> <p><b>Beth Ginsberg</b>, POLS, Stamford</p> <p><b>Syma Ebbin</b>, ARE, Avery Point, Former Grant Winner</p> <p><b>Mark Healey</b>, HIST, Former Grant Winner</p> <p><b>Dave Atkin</b>, COMM</p> <p><b>Lauren Schlesselman</b>, CETL</p> <p><b>Jamie Kleinman</b>, PSYC, Former Grant Winner</p> <p><b>Jason Courtmanche</b>, ENGL</p> <p><b>Jason Vokoun</b>, NRE, Former Grant Winner</p>
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## Appendix A: Course Selection for Alignment

1. Using the Six-Year Alignment Schedule, the departments that are up for alignment in the current year are determined.
2. Using enrollment data from the previous academic year, the number of sections and enrollment for every Gen Ed course for each eligible department up for alignment is recorded.
3. It is noted whether courses are offered at any of the Regional campuses.
4. When all courses for each department have been logged, the largest course will be pre-selected and will automatically be aligned for whatever content area(s) or competency/ies it carries.
5. After that, an online random number generator is used to choose two of the courses for each content area and/or competency. If there is only one eligible course in an area, that course is automatically selected for alignment. If there are multiple courses available for CA3, one selected should be Lab and one should be non-Lab if possible. If there are multiple courses available for CA4, one should be International and one should be non-International if possible.
6. In alternate cycles, the GEOC Chair may approve the selection of the second-largest course so that the same large course is not always being aligned every cycle.
7. Once courses are selected, all possible record sites are checked to verify that the course has not been added, revised, or reviewed in the past five years.
8. If a course is found to be ineligible for alignment, the random number generator is again used to select another course.

9. If a department has no courses eligible for alignment, their responsibility is fulfilled for that cycle. If the department only has courses eligible for some content areas or competencies, they are only responsible for courses in those areas.