

Proposed General Education Program

April 30, 2004

Public institutions in the Commonwealth of Kentucky are expected to provide seamless transfer from one public institution to another. To achieve this goal, the Council on Postsecondary Education has given considerable attention to general education at both two-year and four-year institutions. The Council has asked each public institution to identify a 33-hour core of general education courses that includes nine hours of communication, three hours of mathematics, six hours of arts and humanities, six hours of natural science, and nine hours of social and behavioral science. Also, each institution can define a 15-hour institution-specific block of general education courses. If a student completes both the 33-hour core and the 15-hour institution-specific block, then the student can transfer to another public institution with certification that general education is complete.

In this document the General Education Committee proposes a new General Education Program of 48 hours. The 33-hour core is designed to achieve the goals of General Education at EKU by providing foundation skills and knowledge within the framework suggested by the Council on Postsecondary Education. In addition, the Committee is recommending an additional 15 hours in courses designed to help students make informed wellness decisions, to provide students with a breadth of knowledge outside the major, and to provide students with a depth of knowledge of a theme.

The General Education Core (33 hours)

The General Education Core is designed to be a coherent 33-hour program that provides foundation skills in communications, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning and provides foundation knowledge in the arts, humanities, history, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences. After completing the General Education Core at EKU, students will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively by applying skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening and through appropriate use of information technology.
2. Use appropriate methods of critical thinking and quantitative reasoning to examine issues and to identify solutions.
3. Analyze the historical and social contexts of cultural, economic, political, religious, and scientific developments.
4. Analyze the social and behavioral influences that explain how people relate to each other, to institutions, and to communities.
5. Analyze the fundamental natural processes of the world and the interactions of humans and their environment.

6. Analyze the values, cultural context, and aesthetic qualities of artistic, literary, philosophic, and/or religious works.
7. Distinguish the methods that underlie the search for knowledge in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, history, and social and behavioral sciences.
8. Integrate knowledge that will deepen their understanding of, and will inform their own choices about, issues of personal and public importance.

Skills in written communication, oral communication, and critical thinking are initially developed in the 9-hour Communication block (Block One). Each course in this block addresses the first goal and its measurable learning objectives. Each course will also be assessed on a regular basis through a faculty-defined assessment method.

Skills in critical thinking are developed across the core curriculum, while skills in quantitative reasoning are developed in the 3-hour Mathematics block (Block Two). Each course in the mathematics block addresses the quantitative reasoning aspect of the second goal and its measurable learning objectives. Each mathematics course will also be assessed on a regular basis through a faculty-defined assessment method.

Foundation knowledge in the arts and sciences is provided in a six-hour block (Block Three) of arts and humanities, a six-hour block (Block Four) of natural sciences, and a nine-hour block (Block Five) of history and social and behavioral sciences. The courses in these three blocks are designed to illustrate how professionals search for knowledge in each area (Goal seven) and to illustrate how this knowledge can be applied to issues of personal and public importance (Goal eight). Critical thinking and/or quantitative reasoning are an important part of each core course in these three blocks. The courses in each block are expected to address the breadth of the vision expressed in block's goals and to contribute to the overall coherence of the General Education Program. Core courses in each of the three blocks will be assessed on a regular basis through a faculty-defined assessment method.

Individual departments may propose a course for a block of the General Education Core as long as the course meets the goal and learning objectives. The General Education Committee assumes responsibility for certifying courses that meet the goals and learning objectives. Most core courses will be designed to provide students with a breadth of knowledge of the discipline. However, in those disciplines that are quantitative or scientific in nature and therefore have linear prerequisite structures, disciplines may propose two types of courses. Some courses may be specifically designed to achieve the goals of general education and may be terminal courses. Other courses achieve the goals of general education and prepare students for more advanced study in the discipline.

Each degree program may designate as supporting courses up to three specific courses that have been approved as General Education courses in the 33-hour core. However, degree programs are encouraged to limit this activity to minimize the adverse consequences associated with changing a major.

Block One: Communications (9 hours)

The courses included in this block are designed to achieve the first goal that students will communicate effectively by applying skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening and through appropriate use of technology.

A. Written Communication.

This area of Block One includes six hours of English Composition. In this area students will develop important skills in written communication, including the process of researching and writing a research paper. Students will achieve the goal for written communication by:

1. Demonstrating rhetorical knowledge by:
 - a. Focusing on a specific purpose for a defined audience.
 - b. Defining a specific topic through a clearly stated thesis.
 - c. Constructing an effective discourse organization.
 - d. Providing adequate and relevant supporting evidence, appropriate documentation, and clear and valid assumptions and conclusions.
2. Applying critical thinking, reading, and writing by:
 - a. Understanding a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including research, understood as finding, evaluating, analyzing, summarizing, and synthesizing appropriate outside sources.
 - b. Integrating their own ideas with those of others.
 - c. Using various forms of technology to support research and to enhance written compositions.
3. Demonstrating control of written language by:
 - a. Controlling sentence structures appropriate to academic writing.
 - b. Controlling grammatical conventions of written Standard English, including word forms, punctuation, and spelling.

B. Oral Communication.

This area of Block One includes three hours of oral communication. Students will achieve the goal for oral communication by:

1. Applying critical thinking by:
 - a. Utilizing various forms of technology to effectively research and organize information required for message production and delivery.
 - b. Adapting oral communication styles to appropriate contexts.
 - c. Evaluating self and others' communication skills.
2. Demonstrating command of communication skills by:
 - a. Successfully implementing effective verbal delivery skills related to the context.
 - b. Successfully implementing effective nonverbal delivery skills related to the context.
3. Demonstrating other-oriented perspective by:
 - a. Writing and articulating ethical issues inherent in the message.

- b. Adhering to standards of ethical communication in presenting one's views.
- c. Writing and articulating messages appropriate for various cultures and groups.

Block Two: Mathematics (3 hours)

The courses in this block are designed to achieve the quantitative reasoning part of the second goal that students will use appropriate methods of (critical thinking and) quantitative reasoning to examine issues and to identify solutions.

Until Fall 2009 the mathematics requirement will be MAT 105 or higher. In Fall 2007 the Mathematics faculty will design and pilot an algebra-based applications course that is intended to replace MAT 105 as the minimum mathematics requirement in Fall 2009. First year students entering in Fall 2009 will be required to take the new algebra-based applications course or a higher course to fulfill the mathematics requirement.

Students will achieve the goal for knowledge of quantitative skills by:

1. Using mathematical methods to state and solve quantitative problems, including those stated in verbal form.
2. Using numerical and graphical data to make reasonable and valid conclusions.
3. Applying mathematical methods to real life problems.

Block Three: Arts and Humanities (6 hours)

The courses in this block are designed to achieve the sixth goal that students will analyze the values, cultural context, and aesthetic qualities of artistic, literary, philosophic, and/or religious works. In this block students will learn how artists and humanists search for knowledge in the arts and humanities, learn how to use this knowledge to examine aesthetic and intellectual expression, and learn to examine cultural values and ethical issues. Critical thinking is an important part of each course. The courses included in this block are designed to explore the breadth of knowledge of the arts (art history/appreciation, music history/appreciation, drama, or theatre) and the breadth of knowledge of the humanities (literature, philosophy, or religion). Courses do not focus narrowly on specific areas in the arts or humanities.

Students will study both the arts and humanities in this block. Students will achieve the goal for knowledge of the arts and humanities by:

1. Reflecting critically upon the ideas and values of one's own and other cultures by exploring creative and intellectual works.
2. Analyzing cultural values and ethical issues expressed in artistic, literary, philosophical, and/or religious works.
3. Analyzing the aesthetic qualities of artistic, literary, philosophical, and/or religious works.

Block Four: Natural Sciences (6 hours)

The courses in this block are designed to achieve the fifth goal that students will analyze the fundamental natural processes of the world and the interactions of humans and their environment. In this block students will learn how natural scientists search for knowledge in the biological and physical sciences and learn how to use scientific knowledge to examine and address issues of personal and public importance. Critical thinking is an important part of each course. The basic natural science courses included in this block are designed to explore the breadth of knowledge in the biological sciences and in the physical sciences. The courses do not focus narrowly on specific areas of the biological or physical sciences.

Students will take one laboratory course from the biological sciences and one laboratory course from the physical sciences. Students will achieve the goal for knowledge of the natural sciences by:

1. Demonstrating an understanding of the methods by which humans gather data and make conclusions in biological and physical sciences.
2. Explaining the major concepts and fundamental processes of biological and physical sciences.
3. Applying the principles and theories of biological and physical sciences to make reasonable and valid conclusions.
4. Applying scientific knowledge to examine and address issues of personal and public importance.

Block Five: Social and Behavioral Sciences (9 hours)

The courses in this block are designed to achieve goals three and four. Students will take one course in history, one course in the social and behavioral sciences, and one additional course in history or the social and behavioral sciences.

A. History

In this area of Block Five the courses are designed to achieve the third goal that students will analyze the historical and social contexts of cultural, economic, political, religious, and scientific developments. Students will learn how historians search for knowledge and learn how to use historical knowledge to address issues of personal and public importance. Critical thinking is an important part of each course. The courses in this area are designed to explore the breadth of historical knowledge of the United States or the World. The courses do not focus narrowly on specific areas. Students will achieve the goal for historical knowledge by:

1. Demonstrating relevant perspective, rooted in time and place, in the analysis of historical sources.
2. Demonstrating an understanding of the interactions of social, cultural, political, religious, economic, scientific and/or technological developments as factors in historical change.

3. Building and clearly communicating an argument on the basis of historical evidence and documentation.
4. Demonstrating ability to understand change over time and the significance and effects of historical events and developments.

B. Social and Behavioral Sciences

In this area of Block Five the courses are designed to achieve the fourth goal that students will analyze the social and behavioral influences that explain how people relate to each other, to institutions, and to communities. Students will learn how social and behavioral scientists search for knowledge of individual and social behavior and learn how to apply this knowledge to issues of personal and public importance. Critical thinking is an important part of each course. The courses in this area are designed to explore the breadth of knowledge of a basic social and behavioral science and do not focus narrowly on one specific area. Students will achieve the goal for knowledge of the social and behavioral sciences in at least one of the basic social sciences by:

1. Demonstrating an understanding of the methods by which social scientists gather data and make conclusions.
2. Explaining the major concepts and fundamental processes basic to the social sciences.
3. Applying the principles and theories of the social sciences to make reasonable and valid conclusions about matters of personal and public importance.

Block Six: the 15-hour block

The General Education Committee recommends a sixth block, the 15-hour block, that provides flexibility in achieving General Education goals and in providing supporting course requirements for specific degree programs.

Block Six is designed to help students make informed decisions about wellness, to provide students with some breadth of knowledge outside the major, and to allow students to develop some depth of knowledge of a theme. Each course in this block must address one or more of the goals of General Education. Each course is expected to develop further skills in critical thinking or quantitative reasoning. Individual departments may propose a course for the 15-hour block as long as the course meets SACS criteria for general education, addresses one or more of the goals of General Education in an appropriate manner, and requires critical thinking or quantitative reasoning. The department offering the course also agrees to assess student learning in each course on a regular basis. The General Education Committee assumes responsibility for certifying courses that meet the goals and learning objectives.

Courses in Block Six may be counted as supporting courses, but not major courses, in a degree program. Degree programs may not require courses using their own prefixes in this block.

Block Six is composed of the three following areas:

A. Wellness (3 hours).

This area of Block Six is designed to help students make informed wellness choices. After completing the wellness area, students will:

1. Analyze the interrelatedness of physical, emotional, and social dimensions of wellness.
2. Apply knowledge to make informed choices regarding wellness in individuals and society.

B. Breadth of Knowledge Requirement (6 hours).

The courses in this area of Block Six are designed to help students further develop a breadth of knowledge in two of the four following areas: arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, or quantitative skills. The learning objectives for each of the first three areas are the same as those in Blocks Three, Four, and Five of the General Education Core. Quantitative skills are defined to include courses from computing, mathematics, or statistics. The learning objectives for mathematics and statistics courses are the same as those for Block Two of the General Education Core. The learning objectives for computing are not yet defined, but acceptable courses will either provide literacy in the use of software packages or introduce students to computer programming.

Each student is required to take one three-hour course from two of the following areas: arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences or quantitative skills. Students take courses from two areas that are not closely related to their major. Each department will identify the area most closely related to each major offered by the department, and the General Education Committee will review and approve those decisions.

C. Depth of Knowledge Requirement (6 hours)

The courses in this block are designed to help students achieve one or more goals of General Education through a more in-depth study of a theme. Each student is required to take an additional six hours of courses that address a common theme. The learning objectives for the courses in this six-hour block depend upon how the requirement is fulfilled.

Students fulfill this requirement in one of the following ways:

1. Degree programs may use the six hours to define a coherent set of supporting courses that address a broadly defined theme. The degree programs that currently designate a significant number of general education courses are most likely to use this method to require specific supporting courses in communication skills, quantitative skills, arts and humanities, natural sciences, or social and behavioral sciences. Therefore, the learning objectives for these courses are likely to be similar to those of corresponding blocks in the General Education Core, but the courses may achieve the objectives through study of more specialized areas than is true in the Core.

2. If degree programs do not require specific supporting courses, then students may choose one of the following options:
 - a. Take six hours of a second language, with all hours in the same second language. The learning objectives for this option are not yet defined, but the courses will provide students with communication skills using a second language.
 - b. Take a six-hour cluster of courses that address a common theme in some depth and in an interrelated, coherent manner. The faculty designing each cluster will define the learning objectives of the cluster, but all clusters must require critical thinking (Goal two) and integrate knowledge to help students understand and address issues of personal and public importance (Goal eight). A cluster may be designed by faculty from one department or by a partnership of faculty from two or more departments of the University. Multi-disciplinary partnerships are strongly encouraged as a means of providing students with a thorough and balanced study of the common theme. The General Education will approve all clusters. Examples of clusters are environmental issues and policy, gender studies, globalization, and poverty.

Since some degree programs may largely control the 15-hour block, students may be adversely affected if they change majors. For this reason degree programs should limit using general education courses as supporting course requirements to the extent possible. The General Education Committee recommends three guidelines for students who change their majors. First, if students change majors after completing one or both courses in area B of Block Six, then they have completed that requirement even if the course is closely related to the new major. The total number of hours required for graduation may increase if the new major requires specific supporting courses in area B of Block Six. Second, if students change to a major requiring a specific block of supporting courses after completing either option under C (2) of Block Six, then the completed option fulfills general education requirements. The specific supporting courses required by the new major may increase the total number of hours required for graduation. Third, if students change majors after completing a specific block of supporting courses for the former major under area C (1) of Block Six, then the completed six-hour block fulfills general education requirements. The total hours required for graduation may increase if the new major also requires specific courses under area C (1). If the new major allows the student to choose an option under area C (2) of Block Six, then the completed six-hour block under C (1) fulfills general education requirements.