

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF GENERAL EDUCATION

PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

General education is the balanced and rigorous academic program in which all degree-seeking students will explore the common body of skills, knowledge, and values that form the basis for lifelong learning. This learning experience is characterized by breadth as well as depth, and so requires proficiency in the numerous foundational skills upon which all disciplines rely and the specific knowledge that any one discipline requires. Students' exploration of values includes ethical deliberation and decision-making, both of which enable their active citizenship in a democratic society and responsible participation in a rapidly changing and technologically driven world.

The general education program:

- Develops a set of skills, knowledge, and values that enables success in any major and is necessary for contemporary life
- Provides opportunities to expand one's worldview beyond a given discipline, and so to become a well-rounded person
- Develops the confidence to think independently and the maturity to act responsibly
- Enables and encourages one to identify and further explore areas of possible academic interest
- Prepares one to formulate, research, communicate, and defend reasoned positions, including those which conflict with one's own beliefs
- Offers opportunities to question critically and to challenge thoughtfully opinions, beliefs, and theories in multiple areas of study
- Prepares one to act ethically by identifying and evaluating one's values and place in the world
- Demonstrates the relevance of intellectual principles to one's personal and professional life
- Promotes a shared knowledge of cultural references that enables common understanding
- Develops technological competencies, especially those that enable one to obtain, utilize, and apply information properly

A DEFINITION OF GENERAL EDUCATION AT PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Unlike a course whose content is mostly or exclusively that of the specific discipline from which it is taught, a general education course must also convey a general body of knowledge, skills, and values. It must satisfy general education requirements for any major or degree program for this reason. A general education course thus requires those who teach it to strike a balance between two distinct yet related objectives. General knowledge, skills, and values must be distinguished from discipline-specific content and also integrated with it so that students can succeed in all disciplines and not just the specific one from which a given general education course is taught. The body of general knowledge, skills, and values conveyed in any general education course must not be an addendum or afterthought but rather be significant, explicitly taught, and easily identifiable.

The discipline-specific content a general education course conveys is general in nature as well. With regard to even its discipline-specific content, a general education course is one in which students survey the landscape of a given discipline rather than detailing its nuances. It conveys a body of general knowledge, skills, and values that is non discipline-specific precisely so that students will have the opportunity to survey the landscapes of multiple disciplines on their way to choosing the specific one(s) they would like to study in greater detail. The fact that this body is conveyed via a discipline-specific course affords students the chance to apply their general knowledge, skills, and values at the same time that they are surveying the numerous specific disciplines from which general education courses are taught.

The best way to initially determine whether a given course is an instance of general education thus comes in the form of two questions:

(1) Will the course satisfy a general education requirement as outlined above for any student irrespective of their major or degree program?

(2) In addition to the content specific to the discipline from which it is taught, does the course convey a body of general knowledge, skills, and values that pertains to any academic discipline?

If the answer to either of these questions is no, then the course is not an instance of general education and will not be granted (or be permitted to maintain) general education status.

If the answer to both of these questions is yes, then proceed to the additional requirements listed in the following pages for each of the six areas of general education courses: Emerging Issues, English Composition, Humanities, Mathematics, Science, and Social Sciences.

Qualification of Emerging Issues General Education Courses at PGCC

CIS 1010, Introduction to Information Technology (previously Computer Literacy) is presently (Spring, 2011) the single general education required course in the emerging issues area. The course fits into a category that, according to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) includes those courses that “institutions have identified as essential to a full program of general education for their students.”

A course in Emerging Issues would emphasize the following College Core Learning Outcomes (numbers correspond to the list on p. 28 of the 2010-2011 College Catalog):

4. Recognize the need for information and locate, evaluate and effectively synthesize the information
9. Utilize computer software and other technologies to enhance college-level learning, communication and visual literacy
10. Evaluate ethical principles and apply them in professional and personal decision making

A key characteristic of emerging issues courses is that they are not narrow and skill-oriented, but convey knowledge, skills, and values that do not extend to just one discipline. Emerging issues courses may involve information technologies, but this is not mandatory. When technologies are included in the course subject matter, their study should enable students to “learn how to learn” these technologies so they are able to keep pace with future technological developments.

In emerging issues courses that are information technology related, CLO 10 is particularly important. Emerging issues, such as the increasing pervasiveness of new technologies not imagined even in the recent past, such as learning management systems, social networks, smart phones and others, make it imperative that students learn not only the mechanics of these technologies, but also that these technologies carry with them the weight of ethical and moral use. They do not exist in a vacuum but rather in context of a life conducted according to ethical and moral principles.

Because of the rapid pace of change and exponential increase in the sheer amount of data available to anyone with an Internet-connected device, the ability to locate and effectively synthesize relevant and reliable information is of key importance to the successful, well-rounded student. It is a characteristic that should be included when evaluating an “emerging issues” general education course that is in the technology area. It certainly may apply to those in areas other than information technology as well.

When determining whether a course qualifies under the emerging issues category, a “yes” answer to the following question is a must, along with the criteria already noted:

Does the course, in addition to providing academic rigor in some of the five traditional general education areas and an exposure to the theoretical underpinnings of a discipline, have such current significance to the general education experience that it is deemed indispensable to the education of students at Prince George’s Community College?

Qualification of English Composition General Education Courses at PGCC:

Composition is a sequence of courses taught in the English department. The sequence consists of two courses, Composition I and Composition II.

Composition I:

English 1010 Composition I: Expository Writing

Composition II:

Students may select from any courses in the English department that are granted status in this category.

English Composition courses that will be granted general education status are those courses that specifically address students' ability to achieve in the following College Learning Outcomes:

- 1 Write in standard English at the college level
- 2 Read, comprehend, and analyze college-level materials
- 3 Reason abstractly and think critically
- 4 Recognize the need for information and locate, evaluate, and effectively synthesize this information
- 10 Evaluate ethical principles and apply them in professional and personal decision-making

Additional Criteria

In both Composition I & II responsible research and documentation skills must be demonstrated. Through the sequence, students will learn to inform, argue, and persuade, and various audiences will be addressed effectively.

Qualifications of Humanities General Education Courses at PGCC

Like all general education courses, courses in the humanities division of the general education program at PGCC provide students with a coherent intellectual experience that is foundational for any higher education curriculum. By introducing students to the fundamental knowledge, skills, and values that are essential to the study of any academic discipline, humanities general education courses enable and encourage them to engage in lifelong learning regardless of the specific discipline and career they pursue.

Core Learning Outcomes

Humanities courses that will be granted general education status are those that address the following CLOs:

- 1) Write and speak effectively in Standard English at the college level
- 2) Read, comprehend, and analyze college-level materials
- 3) Reason abstractly and think critically
- 4) Recognize the need for information and locate, evaluate, and effectively synthesize this information
- 8) Comprehend the nature and value of the fine, literary, and performing arts and relate them to human experiences
- 10) Evaluate ethical principles and apply them in professional and personal decision making

Additional Criteria

In addition to developing their facility for reading college level materials, humanities general education courses should also develop in students the facility to listen without bias, so that they will better appreciate how others generate meanings in and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media.

In addition to developing their ability to comprehend the nature and value of the arts and relate them to human experiences, humanities general education courses should also develop in students the capacity for and exercise of creativity in writing, thinking, and producing art.

In addition to developing their ability to write effectively at the college level, humanities general education courses should advance student's understanding of themselves as writers, including their awareness that they participate with others in public discourse and have moral and ethical responsibilities in that discourse.

Qualifications of Mathematics General Education Courses at PGCC

A general education mathematics course enables the student to use numerical, graphical, and symbolic methods in making personal and professional judgments as well as in dealing with public issues. The course should introduce and develop knowledge of math tools and techniques necessary to succeed in college and careers.

Core Learning Outcomes Criteria

A general education mathematics course must address CLO #5. Students completing a general education mathematics course must comprehend mathematical concepts and methods and engage in quantitative and qualitative reasoning to interpret, analyze, and solve problems.

Additional Criteria

In addition, the course must have performance expectations demonstrating a level of maturity beyond high school Algebra II (Intermediate Algebra). It must include development of problem-solving skills, analysis, and synthesis which introduce students to “ways of thinking” in mathematics. It must introduce mathematical concepts and techniques that can be applied in further study of mathematics and/or other disciplines. And it must explore mathematical applications to other disciplines (Maryland Intersegmental Chief Academic Officers document).

Student Placement

Students may be tested and then placed into a course based on their ability. If a student is placed into a non-general education course which has a general education course within the sequence of prerequisites, then upon successful completion, the student will satisfy the mathematics general education requirement.

Social Science General Education Course Requirements

Qualifications of Social Science General Education Courses at PGCC

Overview

The social science courses meeting the general education requirements will examine the fundamental theories, concepts, and philosophies within the specific disciplines of the social sciences. They will introduce students to a variety of methods used to collect and interpret data, and students will apply that information to the social science disciplines. These courses will also provide students with an understanding of the relationships between society and individuals, across the varied social science disciplines.

Core Learning Outcomes Criteria

Courses that will be granted general education standards are those which address the following CLO's:

1. Write and speak effectively in standard English at the college level;
2. Read, comprehend, and analyze college-level materials;
3. Reason abstractly and think critically;
4. Recognize the need for information and locate, evaluate, and effectively synthesize this information;
6. Explain natural processes and analyze issues using appropriate evidence, employing the principles of the biological, physical, and behavioral sciences;
7. Apply the principles of the social sciences to compare and contrast the core values and traditions of various cultures within the global environment;
10. Evaluate ethical principles and apply them in professional and personal decision making.

CLO's 6, 7, and 10 must be addressed in a particular way.

These courses must provide interdisciplinary examination of issues in the biological, physical, and/or behavioral sciences.

These courses must help students understand diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives by providing them with ongoing opportunities to explore concepts and events (both past and present), make judgments about them, think critically, and generate their own conclusions and opinions.

Moral and ethical principles must be taught and applied in terms of good citizenship. That is, students must ultimately understand that they participate with others in society and have moral and ethical responsibilities in that society.

Additional Criteria

These courses must also address students' ability to achieve the following:

1. To be familiar with a broad spectrum of fundamental concepts to the disciplines represented by each of the fields studied;
2. To understand and appreciate the interaction of the numerous factors that influence individuals, cultures, society, and the natural environment;
3. To use the concepts, theories, and methods of the social and behavioral sciences to analyze individuals, groups, institutions, and societies, both past and present;

4. To apply knowledge to identify and evaluate solutions to personal, cultural, societal, national and international problems to make responsible and informed decisions.

Qualification of Science General Education Courses at Prince George's Community College

Biological and physical science courses meeting the general education requirements will examine living systems and the physical universe. They will introduce the student to the variety of methods used to collect, interpret and apply scientific data, and to an understanding of the relationship between scientific theory and application. Students who wish to earn an A.A., A. S., or an A.S.E. degree are required to take seven credits of science (two courses), one of which must carry laboratory credit.

Core Learning Outcomes

5. Comprehend mathematical concepts and methods and engage in quantitative and qualitative reasoning to interpret, analyze and solve problems
6. Explain natural processes and analyze issues using appropriate evidence, employing the principles of the biological and physical sciences
10. Evaluate ethical principles and apply them in professional and personal decision making

Additional Criteria

Toward that end, a general education course in the biological and physical sciences will actively involve the student in the process of science. The course outcomes when met will enable the student to:

1. Achieve scientific literacy including proficiency in evaluating reports on science, discriminating among sources, and presenting the concept of peer review;
2. Discriminate science from non-science and to demonstrate that science constitutes the testing of hypotheses about natural phenomena through observation;
3. Attain familiarity with some of the tools of science and to have opportunities to use technology to gather and process data;