

General Education Course Approval Process

General Education Information

General Education Course Characteristics. Courses included in the general education program should have the following characteristics:

- they should be available to all students (no prerequisites)
- they should, to the extent possible, include critical thinking, written composition, oral discussion and graphical components
- they must meet all criteria designations within a goal (exception: courses designated SBS, Social and Behavioral Sciences, must meet at least two of the five criteria)
- they may count toward required supporting courses but not toward a student's major or minor programs

General Education Application Process. To seek general education course approval, applicants must complete 3 forms:

- The transmittal form ([link](#))
- The course proposal form ([link](#))
- The appropriate General Education Appendix (Appendix GE) [form\(s\)](#)

All courses submitted to the General Education Committee must include the current transmittal and course approval forms. These are the standard forms used for all course approvals on campus and can be found at the links provided above. Departments seeking a General Education designation for a course will also need to complete the appropriate Appendix GE form(s) identifying the following:

1. The goal or goals (e.g. Goal 1 – Communicate Effectively) that the course is intended to satisfy.
2. The specific designation within a goal that a course is intended to satisfy (e.g. Communication (C)). The appropriate Appendix GE form(s) must be completed for each designator the course is intended to satisfy. One course cannot be used to satisfy more than one designator. So, if a course is approved for more than one designator, students will have to indicate which designator it will be used to satisfy.
3. How each outcome will be met in the proposed course.
4. The assessment procedures that will be used to assess student learning in the proposed course.
5. The evidence that will be provided to demonstrate that students are meeting the outcomes.

Existing general education courses must be submitted to the General Education Committee for approval to be part of the new general education program; any course proposed for

General Education credit must have gained approval from the College Curriculum Committee and the University Curriculum Committee at some time prior to submission to the General Education Committee.

Paths for General Education Course Approval

There are three paths that lead to a course being considered by the General Education Committee for inclusion in the new program. The appropriate path hinges on the degree of change or development required to enable the course to conform to the new general education requirements.

No Significant Change (Path 1): Motion 8 from Faculty Senate 2001-2002 (November 28, 2001) states that the University Curriculum Committee must receive, review, and record all courses that undergo “significant change.” The motion defines significant change as, “changes in credit hours, course title, or any other planned alteration that would affect the course’s catalog listing.”

Significant but Not Substantive Change (Path 2): A currently approved course may be modified in such a way as to create a change in the catalog description but not alter the substantive nature of the course. Examples of “significant but not substantive changes” might include renumbering a course or changing evaluation procedures.

Significant and Substantive Change (Path 3): New courses or currently approved courses that change the topics covered, the number of credits associated with the course, or the pedagogy used (e.g. going from a lecture to a service learning format) would be examples of significant and substantive changes.

Path 1 Process: Existing Courses with No Significant Changes

If there are no significant changes to an existing course, the Department may ask the College Curriculum Committee and Dean, once they have done their work, to refer the course directly to the General Education Committee. If the College Curriculum Committee agrees that there are no significant changes to the course they will certify this by completing the “**Request for Direct Submission of Course Proposal to General Education Committee**” [form](#) and will notify the University Curriculum Committee that this action has been taken. The College Curriculum Committee will forward the “**Request for Direct Submission of Course Proposal to General Education Committee**” form, the transmittal form, course approval form, and appropriate Appendix GE form(s) to the Dean of the College. The Dean reviews the submission to ensure that resources will be available to offer the course as a general education offering if approved by the General Education Committee. The Dean will forward the Request for Direct Submission, Transmittal, Course Approval and Appendix GE forms to the General Education Committee if he/she agrees that resources will be available or back to the submitting Department if not.

A flow chart describing Path 1 is available [here](#).

Path 2 Process: Existing Courses with Significant but Not Substantive Changes

If changes to an existing course are sufficient to alter the catalog description but are not substantive in nature, the Department may complete the “**Request for Expedited Consideration**” [form](#) and ask the College Curriculum Committee for an “expedited” consideration of the course. If the College Curriculum Committee agrees to the request for expedited treatment, they will forward the course materials and the “**Request for Expedited Consideration**” form to the Dean of the College. The Dean reviews the submission to ensure that resources will be available to offer the course as a general education offering if approved by the General Education Committee. The Dean will forward the Request for Direct Submission, Transmittal, Course Approval and Appendix GE forms to the University Curriculum Committee if he/she agrees that resources will be available or back to the submitting Department if not. If the University Curriculum Committee also agrees to the request, their review will be completed in a timely fashion (typically within a week or two of receipt of the request). If approved, the University Curriculum Committee will forward the Request for Expedited Consideration, Transmittal, Course Approval, and Appendix GE forms to the General Education Committee.

A flow chart describing Path 2 is available [here](#).

Path 3: New Courses and Existing Courses with Significant and Substantive Changes

Path 3, the standard approval process, applies to all new courses and existing courses for which there are significant and substantive changes. For these courses the path starts with consideration of the revised course within the relevant Department, followed by consideration of this course by the College Curriculum Committee, followed by consideration by the Dean of the College, followed by the University Curriculum Committee. If approved, the University Curriculum Committee will forward the transmittal form, course approval form, and appropriate Appendix GE form(s) to the General Education Committee.

A flow chart describing Path 3 is available [here](#).

General Education Approval. Once a course reaches the General Education Committee by any path, the committee will:

- consider the relevance of the proposed course to the General Education Mission
- confirm that faculty with appropriate credentials are available to teach the proposed course
- confirm that the necessary assessment procedures are in place

Courses that the General Education Committee approves for inclusion in the general education program will, in general, be approved for up to five years. General education courses should be offered regularly during their approval period.

What happens once a course is approved for the General Education Program?

Once approved, the General Education Committee will forward the relevant material to the Registrar for inclusion in the next course catalog. The Committee will also periodically publish an updated list of the approved general education program courses.

Once a standardized assessment process is developed and approved for each designator, courses for that designator will be expected to adopt that assessment process. The Committee expects sufficient information will be developed to objectively gauge the extent to which each general education course is achieving the desired outcomes.

In this initial process, courses will be granted approval for varying numbers of years so that the periodic reviews of general education courses can be staggered appropriately. The number of years for which the course is approved is expected to be related to the completeness of the proposed assessment procedures.

The Assessment Process

Definition of Assessment. A critical aspect of this general education program is the effort to assess our success in achieving the student learning outcomes we have identified. Assessments are important for improving instruction in the general education program, for the General Education Committee to periodically review the performance of general education classes, and for external accrediting bodies. To make assessments valid and usable for the multiple purposes, outcome measurements for each designator must be consistent with respect to:

- what is measured
- what assessment procedures are used
- how performance is evaluated

For example, within a designation such as Ethical Citizenship (EC), we must have agreement about the component of the learning outcome being measured (e.g. knowledge of material, support for ideas, writing quality, etc.), what kinds of student performance are to be measured (e.g. pre- and post-tests, writing assignments, examination questions, oral presentations, projects, etc.) and how those performances will be evaluated (e.g. setting a scale/rubric for assessing each of the identified components of performance with definitions for each level of performance).

Developing the UW-River Falls, General Education Assessment Process. The General Education and Assessment Committees will form and work with ad hoc committees within each designation to define a standardized assessment process for that designation. The components of these standardized assessment processes will define learning outcomes desired, the instruments to be used to measure performance, and the performance scales to be used.

For additional resources on assessment, go to [\(link\)](#).