

GENERAL EDUCATION GUIDANCE FOR FACULTY

As an accredited university we are required to assess the student learning outcomes associated with our general education program. This document provides guidance for faculty who teach in the general education program that is consistent with the program expectations included in the university catalog as well as the practices and expectations of the General Education Subcommittee and review teams that assess the artifacts representing learning outcomes.

All faculty who teach general education courses are expected to recognize the status of each course on their syllabi and identify relevant [learning outcomes](#) and artifacts that can be assessed. They should also be prepared to periodically submit representative samples of the artifacts when requested to do so by the General Education Subcommittee, which is responsible for planning the ongoing assessment of general education learning outcomes. The information that follows is derived from the Mansfield general education program and the related assessment plan as revised in 2002 and 2006.

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PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The objective of the general education component of an undergraduate degree is to provide students with a foundation for lifelong learning and to enable them to function as responsible citizens in a rapidly changing world, consistent with the traditions of a liberal education.

General education is designed, therefore, to enable students to continue to learn independently of formal classroom instruction. It extends throughout the undergraduate experience and into campus and community life. General education encourages students to develop their abilities to observe, analyze and resolve problems, essential skills in a pluralistic and global environment. Finally, General education makes students aware of the concept of ethical and moral responsibility to self and society.

General education complements course work in the major and assists students in taking their proper place in society by helping them comprehend humankind; its cultures and history, the philosophies by which it lives, the means by which it communicates, and the arts and sciences which better its existence.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

There are two types of courses in general education: Core Requirements and Group Distribution Requirements. The core courses are designed to contribute to students' knowledge of the human experience in a variety of ways. Having completed the Core Courses, a student will be

able to comprehend the breadth and depth of ideas related to human activity of both mind and body.

Core Courses. Core courses must include content designed to foster one or more of the following:

- knowledge of at least one of the varying forms of artistic expression
- enhanced oral communication skills
- enhanced written communication skills, or
- knowledge of behaviors that promote personal well-being.

Group Distribution Courses. General education distribution requirements are satisfied through completion of courses in the Liberal Arts and Sciences disciplines. Students must satisfy the minimum requirements in each of six groups:

- Humanities
- English and modern languages
- Mathematics
- Natural sciences
- Social Sciences
- General Electives

Core and Group Distribution course instructors are expected to include in their syllabi:

- 1) a statement indicating that the course is part of the general education program;
- 2) a list of specific learning outcomes related to the general education program outcomes associated with the program; and
- 3) identification of one or more collectible assignments (artifacts) that colleagues can review to assess student learning related to the course. Regarding this last expectation, it is the responsibility of all faculty teaching general education courses to (a) ensure the inclusion of an assignment that is suitable for review, and (b) periodically collect for collegial review representative samples of the student-created artifacts for that particular assignment.

GROUP DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS

Block 1. Humanities. Students completing courses in the Humanities are expected to acquire an understanding of key historical developments and philosophical traditions that influence the world. Humanities courses examine historical and philosophical issues critically and comparatively through reading and discussing fundamental texts from the world's traditions.

To be approved for the Humanities block, a course must include content and methodologies that guide students toward:

- Knowledge of Western and Non-Western histories and/or philosophies.
- Understanding of how religious, intellectual, social, and philosophical movements have shaped the present world.
- Understanding of the present as a continuum of the past.
- Appropriate-level skills in the reading, critical and analytical analyses of historical and/or philosophical texts

Block 2. Languages and Literature. Students completing courses in Languages and Literature are expected to acquire an understanding of how language, and the literature produced by it, is integral to various aspects of our lives.

To be approved for the Language and Literature block, a course must include content and methodologies that guide students toward:

- Knowledge of literary texts and demonstration of the analytical tools needed to work with these texts.
- Understanding of the historical development of language(s).
- Understanding of the crucial role of language and literature in cultural and self-identity, and aspects of daily life.
- Appropriate-level skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in a natural language.

Block 3. Mathematics. Students completing courses in Mathematics are expected to acquire knowledge about mathematical structures, and skills in using these to manipulate symbolic, quantitative, and geometric information. Students completing Mathematics courses develop an ability to understand and to utilize numerical data and mathematical methods for analysis and problem solving.

To be approved for the Mathematics category, a course must include content and methodologies that guide students toward:

- Understanding of mathematical objects and the relationships between them.
- Quantitative reasoning or problem solving through the use of algorithms, manipulation of symbols, or the creation and interpretation of graphical and tabular information.
- Communicating, using, interpreting, and critiquing quantitative evidence or mathematical logic.

Block 4. Natural Sciences. Students completing courses in the Natural Sciences are expected to understand and practice scientific experimentation, and focus on the nature of scientific reasoning, discovery, and invention through the systematic exploration of basic scientific concepts.

To be approved for the Natural Science category, a course must include content and methodologies that guide students toward:

- Understanding of the scientific method and the natural sciences as experimental disciplines based on empirical evidence.
- Understanding of modern scientific theories.
- Appropriate-level skills in communicating, investigating, and organizing scientific concepts through experimentation, observation, and computation.

Block 5. Social Sciences. Students completing courses in the Social Sciences are expected to examine the structure and organizing principles of human societies, including their psychological and cultural dimensions, as well as their economic, social and political foundations.

To be approved for the Social Sciences category a course must include content and methodologies that guide students toward:

- Knowledge of differing social, economic, and political systems.
- Understanding of differences in customs, practices, and values among various cultural groups.
- Understanding of individual and social behavior.
- Understanding of social science theories and research methods.
- Appropriate-level skills in the reading, critical and analytical analyses of social science texts

In addition to core and group distribution requirements, students must complete courses that promote (a) global awareness, (b) information literacy, and (c) effective writing. Specific objectives and learning outcomes for study in each of these areas are included in the [undergraduate catalog](#) which is available online. Faculty should always refer to the catalog under which a student was admitted to determine a student's academic requirements.

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

General Education courses represent various disciplines and meet the general education requirements. Specifically, general education is designed to develop student competency across the core and general education groups in the following skills:

- Thinking skills including critical thinking, problem solving, and analysis
- Communication
- An understanding of the modes of thought and methodologies of the humanities, language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences.

Not all general education courses must address all areas, but all must address at least some of the outcomes noted above and include instruction that enable students to achieve competence in those outcomes.

Review of Artifacts

Each year, assessment of learning outcomes for general education is undertaken via a collegial faculty review of artifacts derived from courses in each of the areas of general education. *Syllabi for all courses that are included the general education program must:*

- (a) include a statement indicating that the course is within the program;
- (b) list specific learning outcomes related to the general education program outcomes identified below, as well as well as the objectives for the particular group; and
- (c) identify one or more artifacts that colleagues can review to assess student learning related to the course.

It is the responsibility of all faculty teaching a general education course to ensure that the course includes one or more artifacts suitable for review. Courses are reviewed periodically based on a schedule determined by the General Education Subcommittee. The committee will work with faculty teaching in a particular area to identify the timeframe for assessment and to collect representative samples of the artifacts.

Thinking Skills

Thinking skills include different types of processing information. Common examples are critical thinking, problem solving, and analysis. The following section defines three types of thinking and offers examples.

- **Critical Thinking.** Critical thinking is a broad type of reasoning that applies learning to various situations and problems. The related skill set includes: recognizing and avoiding common mistakes in reasoning, identifying personal assumptions, challenging assumptions, gathering and evaluating evidence from a variety of sources, distinguishing different kinds of reasoning, and analyzing, synthesizing, and integrating information to draw appropriate conclusions.

Examples of Critical Thinking Artifacts

1. We are flooded everyday with images and messages to consume or buy more. The issue of whether to purchase or not has never been questioned more closely than in recent years. Yet, numerous intellectuals have debated this issue over time. In your own opinion, are you for or against modern mass consumption? Support your answers with arguments from some of the social critics you have studied.
 2. Both Daniel Boorstin's The Americans: The Democratic Experience and Roland Marchand's Advertising the American Dream are consider classic examples of historical works within the genre of socio-economic or even cultural history. Compare and contrast their different approaches and methodologies in their subject materials. Is there any preference for one or the other, and what kind of audiences were the authors targeting?
 3. What do you consider to be the "golden age" of English, that is, its time of greatest development and richest ability to express the ideas of its speakers? (an essay test question)
 4. Step away from your individual experiences, and examine and describe the unwritten intangible social forces that shape your behavior.
 5. Explain two major theoretical paradigms in social science, their major assumptions, and crucial evidence given in support. Include how these theories are used in everyday life as well as broader society. Choose your favorite and explain why.
- **Problem Solving.** This type of reasoning is focused on the process of finding and implementing appropriate solutions to a problem. Problem solving involves a step-by-step progression from defining a problem, searching for information, generating possible solutions, testing hypotheses using appropriate methodologies, identifying and evaluating constraints, formulating implementation plans, and establishing success criteria.

Examples of Problem Solving Artifacts

1. Which social science research method is most conducive to the study of illegal immigration? Explain why you selected that method.
 2. Field Research Report: Following the steps of observation, hypothesis forming, testing the hypothesis, and revising the hypothesis, students will conduct field research on some aspect of language as it is used around them. For example, the student will study and report on an unusual pronunciation might be part of a speaker's dialect, or a piece of commonly used jargon.
- **Analytical Thinking.** Analytical thinking involves identifying the underlying structure of complex information or ideas and focuses on the process of breaking down the information or ideas into simpler parts in order to understand how the parts relate or are organized. Tasks at the analysis level require the learner to take the material apart and examine the pieces to identify logical errors (i.e., point out a contradiction or an erroneous inference), and to draw relationships between concepts, theories, and processes (e.g., comparing and

contrasting). Verbs that may describe learning outcomes include:

Deduce	Break down	Relate
Outline	Infer	Diagram
Illustrate	Subdivide	Point to (out)

Examples of Analytical Thinking Artifacts

1. A paper describing overall education policy and specific practices in the United States compared with Japan,
2. A lab report showing how the functions of x and y are related in a machine,
3. A report that determines the iron content in Tioga River water,
4. A test or written assignment that asks students to:
 - Identify the major and minor ideas of ...
 - How are ___ the same, and how are they different?
 - List the basic assumptions...
 - Describe the variety of motives...
 - Distinguish between theory and facts...
 - Separate the major and minor themes...

Other analytical thinking assignments

1. Between 1860 and 1910, what were the characteristics of industrialization in the United States? What were the economic devices and institutions that facilitated its growth? Discuss some of the better-known entrepreneurs. Finally, how did the growth of big businesses affect American society, its ordinary people, and their workplace?
2. In the post WW II era, many countries in Southeast Asia began to seek independence. What factors spurred their desire for independent rule? In the process of gaining self-rule, what problems did countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia face? Since gaining independence, how have these countries fared? Why is it that countries such as Singapore and Malaysia have fared much better than Indonesia?
3. Why did Europe “scramble” for Africa in the 1880s? What were their motives for carving out Africa? In doing so, who were the biggest benefactors in this European decision of divide and conquer? What methods were used to ensure the European exploitation of the peoples and resources? You need not discuss every European colony, but illustrate at least two if not three cases to support your essay.
4. Using Erika Friedl's analysis as a model, discuss the role of men in Afghan society based on non-Western literature.
5. Draw a phrase structure tree of the following sentence. (from English Grammar)
6. Given the population of residents in New York City, explain how you would determine a representative sample size and how would you select who would be in the sample?

- **Communication.** Students communicate effectively as defined by their ability to:
 - Understand and make themselves understood
 - Convey information clearly and concisely
 - Communicate for a variety of purposes
 - Express their needs, desires, and opinions
 - Access tools, information, and strategies from a variety of resources
 - Communicate with diverse audiences

The communication form can be produced in one or more media (written, visual, auditory and/or performance) that is appropriate to that specific discipline. The communication form must convey a student's level of understanding and remain consistent with the conventions for that specific mode of communication. Artistic forms and performances must include a written explanation.

Examples of Communication Artifacts

1. What do you consider to be the "golden age" of English, that is, its time of greatest development and richest ability to express the ideas of its speakers? (an essay test question)
2. In the post WW II era, many countries in Southeast Asia began to seek independence. What factors spurred their desire for independent rule? In the process of gaining self-rule, what problems did countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia face? Since gaining independence, how have these countries fared? Why is it that countries such as Singapore and Malaysia have fared much better than Indonesia?
3. A Power Point presentation on a research project in biology.

Group and Course Related Outcomes (sometimes referred to as WIG)

In addition to core and group distribution requirements, students must complete courses that promote (a) global awareness, (b) information literacy, and (c) effective writing. With the exception of students who transfer to Mansfield from another institution, all students must complete three designated Global Awareness (G) courses and three designated Information Literacy (I) courses (two of which must be at the upper level).

Global Awareness (G)

Global Awareness opens doors into varied cultures and furthers an understanding of our complex world. It considers the perspectives of peoples from cultures and circumstances other than one's own, and the major challenges facing humankind requiring global cooperation, while also recognizing the phenomena that engender continued conflict and competition in an increasingly interdependent world.

(G) Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate an ability to:

- Identify major global issues
- Examine global issues from multiple perspectives
- Examine the concepts of power, gender, race and class intra- and inter-culturally

- Compare and contrast their own beliefs and attitudes with those of other national, cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, and religious groups.

Global course instructors are expected to include in their syllabi:

- 1) a statement indicating that the course is a Global Awareness (G) course;
- 2) specific learning outcomes related to those listed above immediately above; and,
- 3) one or more collectible assignments that colleagues can review in order to assess student learning related to the course.

Informational Literacy (I)

Information Literacy is a fundamental component of the educational process in which a student learns how to think actively and critically about information. Courses designated as Information Literacy (I) are expected to require students to become skilled users of information sources in many locations and formats, thereby increasing their responsibility for their own learning.

(I) *Student Learning Outcomes:*

Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the significance of information in solving everyday problems.
- Identify a wide variety of information resources (both format and source).
- Identify needed information to solve a given problem or understand an issue.
- Demonstrate recognition of distortion and other misuses of information.
- Demonstrate effective use of information in order to address a given problem or issue
- Present information issues and solutions to others.

Information Literacy course instructors are expected to include in their syllabi:

- 1) a statement indicating that the course is an Informational Literacy (I) course;
- 2) specific learning outcomes related to those identified above; and,
- 3) one or more collectible assignments that colleagues can review in order to assess student information literacy related to the course.

RUBRICS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING GOALS

Rubrics describe the criteria against which artifacts will be assessed. The general education learning goals by definition reflect general abilities and skills (thinking skills, communication, and an introduction of the principles, substance, and methodology of humanities, language and literature, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences). Different rubrics are used to assess different types of learning outcomes. Evaluators will select the appropriate rubrics for the outcomes illustrated in the artifact. Upon request, the General Education Subcommittee will provide additional information about the rubrics that are currently being used to assess the learning outcomes.

Revised 5/20/08