

General Education Committee Report to Academic Senate, 2021-2022

Membership

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Tom Hanney, SOIS
Sarah Thompson, CAD, GEC chair
Tamas Wiandt, COS

Ongoing Charges

The General Education Committee shall study the general education curriculum and general education course proposals from a university-wide perspective and maintain appropriate inter-college relationships with regard to general education matters. The committee will: assure that there is on-going monitoring and assessment of the general education curriculum; assure that there is an on-going review of the general education curriculum to determine any need for modification; consult with the ICC regarding procedures needed to initiate, review and approve a curriculum modification proposal; review proposed courses for inclusion in the general education curriculum; assure the maintenance and up-keep of a data base of courses that are included as general education.

- *Per DI.0, review general education (GE) courses learning outcomes and assessment.*
- *Audit/review of GE student learning outcomes and courses.*
- *Request that GEC review the results from the General Education Course Audit and make recommendations if appropriate.*

The GEC met weekly over Zoom during the 2021-2022 academic year. Meetings were held Mondays at 1PM. Review and discussion of course proposals for General Education status comprised the majority of our business for the year. We also attempt to solve potential conflicts of interest and overlap of disciplinary expertise by contacting relevant academic units. All decisions have been forwarded to the Registrar's Office and to the respective colleges; courses and immersions are assigned appropriate tags in SIS. Immersions are also sent to the Provost's Office and Bulletin for publication. The GEC has maintained minutes or records of each meeting.

Courses Reviewed: 61

Approved: 55

Pending: 3

Not suitable for GE status: 3

Immersion Reviewed: 5

Approved: 4 (Theatre Design and Stagecraft; Gender and STEM Studies; Gender Equity, Social Institutions, and Public Affairs; Biology immersion update)

New charge 1

Explore possible revisions to the Perspective system such as adding Diversity as a Perspective and allowing courses that fulfil the requirements for two Perspectives to count for both Perspectives. Propose modification to Policy D01.4 to Senate.

See Appendix I for the committee's response.

New charge 2

Report to Senate on the outcomes of the General Education Course Audit and GE student learning outcomes and courses, including recommendations as appropriate.

The General Education Course Audit is complete. To avoid duplicative work, updates for course and outcome alignment for the Essential Element outcomes in the SIS are pending RIT's decision to purchase a course management system.

This year the Office of EEA provided oversight for the assessment of four General Education Student Learning Outcomes:

- Express oneself effectively in common college-level written forms using standard American English (benchmark not met)
- Revise and improve written products (benchmark not met)
- Express oneself effectively in presentations, either in spoken standard American English or sign language (benchmark not met)
- Demonstrate comprehension of information and ideas accessed through reading (results pending)

Summary assessment reports including details, trends, and faculty recommendations will be ready by the fall.

Additional work

2020-21 carryover work

- The GEC has been updating language for faculty regarding GEC processes, and hope to have that posted on the Academic Affairs GE webpage soon.
- Locate outdated references to Gen Ed/Immersion information on the RIT website and contact the owners about updating or removing the content

Both charges have been addressed, but we need a webmaster who can update the relevant web pages.

Suggestion for charges, 2022-2023

Contribute to implementation of a course management system for GEC approvals and records.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Thompson, GEC chair

Appendix I

Response to Charge 1

The GEC fully supports formally and intentionally embedding diversity into the RIT curriculum. We propose that RIT consider ways to foster diversity and inclusion in the classroom across the general education curriculum and within academic programs.

Recommended Next Steps:

Defining what is meant by the word “diversity” as it pertains to the general education curriculum is the first step. **The intended student learning outcome(s) should be determined before taking further action.** The following steps provide guidance.

1. Define “Diversity” and the intended curricular scope. The recent RIT Campus Climate survey includes the following definition for diversity: “*differences among people in their race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, culture, national origin, religious beliefs and identity, age, disability status, and political perspective.*” Perhaps this definition is appropriate. Additionally, RIT must also consider whether ideas about equity and social justice should also be included in a university definition. RIT must first decide what we want students **to know and be able to do** before planning to revise the existing framework. Doing so may require a committee of internal and external experts to guide us.*
2. Develop intended student learning outcome(s).
3. Conduct research. Many other universities have already developed solutions that would be useful to review. Some interesting examples include:
 - [University of Massachusetts](#) added a general education diversity course requirement as part of a comprehensive campus plan. All diversity courses are expected to meet a set of six learning objectives. For example: *Students will gain knowledge of structural and cultural forces that shape or have shaped discrimination based on factors such as race, ethnicity, language, religion, class, ability, nationality, sexuality, or gender.*
 - [Cal Poly](#) developed university-wide learning objectives that all students must demonstrate. For example: *Analyze the current social, political, artistic, and/or economic lives of historically marginalized people in the United States and across the world.*
4. Examine potential solutions to embed diversity into the RIT curriculum including the benefits, challenges, and resources required for implementation. GEC has already begun this process.

*As RIT is currently discussing the possibility of working with an external specialist in DEI/J issues to address curricular changes, action plans will need to address that specialist’s or team’s recommendations.

Solutions to Consider

GEC has explored several options – some come with considerable changes to the current structure of the framework. At this time, we are not able to recommend one solution.

Solution	Actions Required	Challenges/Resources Needed
Add Diversity as an eighth perspective in the GE framework	Develop perspective definition, learning outcome, and rubric Develop/align courses Ensure that the 8 th perspective course will fit into student schedules Ensure enough available seats Update Table 1 and catalog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough credits available in current curriculum (this could be alleviated by double-counting) • Faculty expertise, ability to offer enough seats • GEC to review all courses
Tag “Diversity-Intensive” courses across the entire curriculum (GE and program). Offer Diversity across the curriculum or include a requirement across Gen Ed and programs	Develop definition and requirements for courses to be tagged Determine course review process Ensure enough available seats Update Table 1 and catalog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to propose, review, and tag courses • Departments and GEC to review many courses • Potential modifications to course content/course outlines • Determine requirements
Revise existing Social and Global perspectives to include the concept of Diversity	Develop new perspective definitions, learning outcomes, and rubrics Align courses/revise alignment Ensure enough available seats Update Table 1 and catalog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-review all existing Social and Global courses • Potential modifications to course content/course outlines • Update catalog • Departments and GEC to review all courses
Revise and/or combine Social, Global, and Ethical perspectives to provide more specific coverage of Diversity topics	Develop new perspective definitions, learning outcomes, and rubrics Align courses/revise alignment Ensure enough available seats Update Table 1 and catalog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all existing Social and Global courses • Potential modifications to course content/course outlines • Update catalog • Departments and GEC to review all courses

<p>Examine methods to include Diversity training/education outside of Gen Ed</p>	<p>Determine where DEIJ issues are being discussed or taught within program courses, and discover additional opportunities to include DEIJ within programs</p>	<p>(This would be work for ICC or a committee devoted to this purpose)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing program courses or program opportunities incorporating DEIJ issues • Potential modifications to program courses or curricular paths
<p>Enhance existing courses (e.g. UWRT 150) or design seminars that all students take</p>	<p>Develop new curricular content Determine how students can fit the course into their schedule (if seminar is selected)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course design/redesign • Not enough credits available in current curriculum • Faculty expertise, ability to offer enough seats
<p>Design critical thinking or communication outcome options that speak to DEIJ issues</p>	<p>Develop new options for meeting existing communication or critical thinking outcomes that incorporate DEIJ approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene committee to contribute to the description and assessment of DEIJ options meeting critical thinking and communication outcomes • Course design/redesign • Re-review of existing GE courses to evaluate updated proposals
<p>DEIJ outcome to be added alongside communication and critical thinking outcomes; Gen Ed courses may be required to fit all three or two of three outcomes</p>	<p>Develop new GE learning outcome in DEIJ approaches/methods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene committee to contribute to the description and assessment of learning outcome • Course design/redesign • Re-review of existing GE courses to evaluate updated proposals

<p>Reimagine structure and requirements of RIT's Gen Ed curriculum entirely, including DEIJ within a new core curriculum</p>	<p>Research, develop, and implement a new framework for liberal arts and sciences requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires the largest amount of work from faculty, staff, and administrators • Convene a dedicated committee with broad faculty participation and support • Consult with external specialists • Research into current approaches to general education • Redesign of framework • Faculty outreach • Review and approval of courses • Design of new courses • Documentation
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Perspective policy in relation to charge 1:

Explore possible revisions to the Perspective system such as adding Diversity as a Perspective and allowing courses that fulfil the requirements for two Perspectives to count for both Perspectives. Propose modification to Policy D01.4 to Senate.

Current policy wording is found here:

<https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/policiesmanual/d014>

Suggested changes:

“I. Overview

The General Education Framework includes aspects that provide breadth and depth of study, and because communication and critical thinking skills are essential to the education of every student at RIT, opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement in these domains will pervade the General Education curriculum.

Breadth in the General Education curriculum is achieved through seven Perspective categories that promote different ways of knowing about the world. Courses in these categories will introduce students to fundamentals of liberal arts and sciences (methods, concepts, and theories) while emphasizing **learning outcomes in communication, critical thinking, and the selected Perspective discipline(s). Courses designated in Perspective categories should bear a minimum of three credits each, and should be broadly open to the student body for enrollment.** Students achieve deeper learning in a focus area by completing an Immersion, consisting of a minimum of three related **General Education** courses in a theme or field totaling

at least nine credit hours.

II. Policy Statement on Requirements

In accordance with RIT Policies and Procedures Policy D01.1, courses considered for General Education standing will be evaluated using the criteria set forth by the RIT Student General Education Student Learning Outcomes and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Office of College and University Evaluation Policy Statement on Liberal Arts and Sciences. In particular, all **General Education** courses will provide learning experiences designed to achieve at least one student learning outcome in both communication and critical thinking, as described in the General Education Framework. **Because NYSED mandates a different number of liberal arts and sciences credits for different degree types and RIT's General Education Framework encompasses NYSED liberal arts and sciences requirements, each type of degree awarded at RIT requires a different number of General Education credits.** In accordance with NYSED's guidelines, students must complete, at a minimum, the number of credits indicated in each category, as illustrated in Table 1..."

Reasoning for changes:

- Clarification of expectations for Perspectives courses.
- In policy, the RIT-specific use of General Education as a term should be clarified. NYSED uses "liberal arts and sciences" because courses in liberal arts and science disciplines are what the state requires for undergraduate degrees. General Education, with capital letters, is the term used at RIT to designate the shared curricular path that incorporates NYSED's liberal arts and sciences requirements but also includes additional student learning outcomes. NYSED does not use "general education" for liberal arts and sciences expectations, but instead uses it to refer to broad educational policies, including for K-12 students.

The GEC does not recommend "double counting" - that a single course that may have two Perspective designations should be counted by the student in two Perspective categories. Students gain substantial benefit from the breadth and scope of classes across the Perspective categories not only because of the categories, but due to pursuing different subjects with different instructors and approaches. Programs may already designate specific courses in three Perspective categories toward the major. As a key element of the Perspective requirement is breadth of exposure, additional crossover would be potentially problematic in that programs could attempt to prescribe additional specific courses and limit student choice as well as exposure to disciplines and experiences outside the major.