

General Education Assessment and Refinement

Council on Academic Affairs
General Education Subcommittee

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Rationale

The moratorium on changes to EIU's General Education (Gen Ed) curriculum expired at the end of May 2004. The Council on Academic Affairs (CAA) has undertaken a review of the existing Gen Ed curriculum to ensure that it continues to meet constituent needs.

The Council on Academic Affairs would like to institute a departmental level review of Gen Ed for the purpose of fine-tuning the existing curriculum. To guide this process, CAA members met with college curriculum committee members, advisors, chairs and deans. Based on these productive meetings, CAA encourages departments to consider the following background information in their review and apply the following Recommendations when considering changes.

Definition & Background

What is general education? Some believe that it results from a standard selection of required courses in the fine arts and humanities, math, and physical, biological and behavioral sciences. Others offer less precision in their definition, but expect broad coverage in the curriculum. For example, Ernest L. Boyer and Arthur Levine stated that the agenda for "common learning," a.k.a. general education, related to those "experiences, relationships, and ethical concerns that are common to all of us simply by virtue of our membership in the human family at a particular moment in history." In other words, "general education is an institutional affirmation of society's claim on its members" (Boyer and Levine, pg 19).

The EIU Gen Ed curriculum includes core courses typical of traditional general education supported by a philosophy in keeping with a liberal education [and compliant with EIU's mission (see **Appendix A**)]. EIU's Gen Ed "offers students an intellectual foundation for their future academic, professional, and personal lives." It accomplishes this by requiring hours in core subjects such as math, science, composition and communication, humanities and fine arts, and social and behavioral sciences (including government). It ensures a sustained and open-minded examination of the deepest questions of human existence, an examination that is meant to free students from prejudices in such matters (paraphrased from Malcolmson, et.al., pg. 5).

The EIU Gen Ed curriculum also provides clear criteria around which accrediting bodies conduct their review. It complies with expectations expressed by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) that a university's general education requirement be "consistent with the institution's mission and designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry." Initial feedback provided during the NCA accreditation visit (Feb. 14-15, 2005) indicated that the existing Gen Ed curriculum appropriately emphasizes EIU's higher education goals, but that more focused assessment of the goals of Gen Ed must occur.

University committees, including the Committee for the Assessment of Student Learning (CASL) and its subcommittees -Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), and Speaking Across the Curriculum (SAC), have built curriculum assessment devices around selected skills (i.e., Electronic Writing Portfolio; Speech 1310G; the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal; Global Citizenship Survey, Senior Seminar).

Department level assessment of Gen Ed goals could provide another layer of evidence about the strengths of the Gen Ed curriculum. CASL will be instrumental in refining Gen Ed assessment to ensure uniformity in this process.

Finally, the EIU Gen Ed curriculum respects the Illinois Articulation Initiative, developed as a result of a recommendation from the Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities. Through the IAI associate and baccalaureate granting institutions work as equal partners to ensure that lower division programs are comparable in scope, quality and rigor. The IAI General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) outlines the courses that the IAI deems an “essential foundation for a well-rounded education” (<http://www.itransfer.org>). The courses follow a traditional liberal arts general education model including courses from the sciences, humanities and liberal arts. Illinois colleges and universities accept transfer credit for courses listed in the IAI core (GECC). This makes it easier for students to transfer to different institutions while still ensuring that they benefit from a core curriculum.

EIU currently accepts credit from transfer students for courses that appear on the IAI GECC list even if the course is not part of EIU’s Gen Ed curriculum. For example, a student who wishes to transfer in HIS 2010: U.S. History to 1876 or HIS 2020: U.S. History since 1876 to satisfy either the Humanities or Social and Behavioral Sciences requirement can do so, because the IAI GECC recognizes these courses in either area. Yet, a student enrolled exclusively at EIU cannot satisfy his/her EIU Gen Ed requirement using either course because EIU’s Gen Ed curriculum does not include either course. Additionally, EIU Gen Ed requirements comply with IAI GECC hour requirements, but some specific core requirements are different. For example, EIU students must complete three hours in “constitution” (Social and Behavioral Sciences) through either PLS 1153 (PLS 1193) or HIS 3600 (HIS 3690). EIU students can also transfer in S5 900 (American/U.S. National Government per the IAI list) to satisfy this requirement. Though this “constitution” requirement, the EIU curriculum educates “responsible citizens,” a goal central to EIU’s mission and its Gen Ed curriculum.

Recommendations

CAA recommends that departments consider their Gen Ed courses (current or planned) in relation to certain criteria. EIU’s Gen Ed offerings should continue to facilitate course transfer and articulation. While departments may consider courses that move beyond the IAI expectations, each course still must:

- further EIU’s Gen Ed Mission, specifically addressing the Gen Ed goals (**Appendix B**)
- comply with NCA recommendations relative to Gen Ed
- comply with the philosophy of general education to increase student knowledge and promote broad intellectual inquiry; rather than to accomplish narrow professional objectives
- be offered each academic year to ensure student access
- avoid duplicative content with other Gen Ed courses
- be kept at a reasonable enrollment to facilitate critical and reflective thinking. Several factors support EIU’s placement by *U.S. News & World Report* as the highest ranking public university in Illinois in the category: “Top Public Universities – Master's (Regional/Midwest),” most notably the low student to faculty ratio (17:1). EIU remains committed to providing students with compelling learning experiences accomplished through learner-centered student-faculty interaction. Small class sizes facilitate this; but high demand and limited resources often threaten small class size. Every effort should be made at the department level to offer Gen Ed courses with student enrollments of 40 or under.

Furthermore, CAA asks departments offering Gen Ed to do the following:

- retain 3000 level Gen Ed courses because of the demand for these courses by students in the School of Continuing Education's nontraditional degree program as well as Education and Professional Studies majors, and Career and Organizational Studies majors who use them to satisfy upper division requirements and requirements for areas of concentration
- ensure that courses satisfying the "focus on cultural diversity" address the parameters identified for such courses (See **Appendix C**)
- review Senior Seminars to insure that they comply with the Senior Seminar Mission (See Senior Seminar Mission Statement, **Appendix D**). The department that proposed the Senior Seminar will be responsible for offering the course. (See "List of Senior Seminars and Sponsoring Departments," **Appendix E**).
- implement assessment of Gen Ed offerings at the department level. This can be integrated into Departmental Assessment Summaries. CASL will facilitate this through identification of appropriate assessment measures for use at the department level.

Course proposals for new Gen Ed offerings must include in their implementation plan an assurance that existing faculty can cover the courses. See section 5.a. Implementation, New/Revised Course Proposal – <http://www.ciu.edu/>

CAA recommends that departments refine their Gen Ed offerings (including eliminating offerings) if courses do not meet the criteria noted above, i.e., the course is infrequently offered or the course substantially duplicates other Gen Ed courses.

Additionally, departments and administrative bodies could consider the following as appropriate to make Gen Ed compliance easier:

- work with CASL to further Gen Ed assessment by refining goals, existing tools, and procedures in light of initial NCA accreditation-visit feedback
- incorporate the IGE (International General Education) prefix to identify general education courses offered through study abroad venues; i.e. IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in Humanities; IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in Fine Arts; IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in Biological Sciences; IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in Physical Sciences; IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in Economics; IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in Geography; IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in History; IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in Philosophy; IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in Political Science; IGE 3xxx: Special Topics in Sociology; etc. Honors sections could be developed, as well. Departments with Gen Ed courses that could be offered abroad will be responsible for completing the Gen Ed course proposal process
- coordinate efforts to ensure that students satisfy uneven hour requirements, i.e. the 7 hour requirement in Scientific Awareness

Timeframe

Spring 2005:

- CAA discussion of draft Gen Ed Review Guidelines; CAA issues Guidelines
- Departmental review commences
- Changes to Senior Seminars and new Senior Seminars may be proposed as any time

Spring/Summer 2005

- Departmental review continues

Fall 2005:

- CAA will consider all Gen Ed revisions as a package (revisions effective Fall 2006)
- Revisions must matriculate through departmental and college curriculum committees and be forwarded to CAA NO LATER THAN November 11, 2005 to be acted on at the December 1 and December 8, 2005 CAA meetings. This will then give time for departments to schedule Gen Ed instruction effective Fall 2006.
- CAA will recommend a new moratorium: Fall 2006 through Spring 2010

Fall 2006

- Implementation of revised Gen Ed curriculum

References:

Boyer, Ernest L and Arthur Levine. *A Quest for Common Learning* (Washington, DC: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning, 1981).

The Hollow Core: Failure of the General Education Curriculum (A Fifty College Study by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni) (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Trustees and Alumni, 2004).

Illinois Articulation Initiative (revised 11/30/01) <http://www.itransfer.org>

Malcolmson, Patrick, Richard Myers, and Colin O'Connell. *Liberal Education and Value Relativism* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1996).

APPENDIX A

EIU Mission Statement

Eastern Illinois University offers superior yet accessible undergraduate and graduate education. Students learn the methods and outcomes of free inquiry in the arts, sciences, humanities and professions guided by a faculty known for its commitment to teaching, research/creative activity, and service. The University community strives to create an educational and cultural environment in which students refine their abilities to reason and to communicate clearly so as to become responsible citizens in a diverse world.

APPENDIX B

General Education at EIU

<http://www.eiu.edu/~acaffair/genedmiss.htm>

“Responsible Global Citizenship through Mindful Scholarship”

General Education at Eastern Illinois University offers students an intellectual foundation for their future academic, professional, and personal lives. Mindful scholarship necessitates not only dedicated study but also reflection on the purposes and consequences of that study. By fostering serious and enthusiastic learning, Eastern Illinois University seeks to instill the value of intellectual curiosity and lifelong education in its students. Equipped with the values and traditions of scholarship, students will be better prepared to fulfill their duties as responsible citizens and capable leaders in a diverse world.

The mission of the General Education program at Eastern Illinois University is three-fold:

- to enhance student literacy and oral communication skills
- to encourage students to think critically and reflectively
- to introduce students to knowledge central to responsible global citizenship

Enhancing Literacy and Oral Communication:

Mindful scholarship requires that students listen and read critically as well as write and speak clearly and effectively. Additionally, functioning in a global society requires an appreciation of communication within and among cultures through both the written and spoken word. Therefore, a foundation for further exploration within the general education curriculum, for study in one's major area, and for developing a successful career, requires both course work in and assessment of written and oral communication skills.

Critical and Reflective Thinking

Mindful scholars engage in a process of critical thinking learned through study in the traditional disciplines: physical and biological sciences, social and behavioral sciences, and humanities and fine arts. Developing analytical thinking skills and working in the modern world require knowledge of mathematics. Additionally, study in any of the sciences requires mathematical skills. Consequently, the general education program requires one course from a select group in that discipline.

In physical and biological science courses, students experience the rigor and practice of scientific inquiry through classroom and laboratory experiences. They learn to consider analytically the methods of describing, predicting, understanding, and explaining physical and biological phenomena. In these courses, students confront the social, economic, political, and ethical implications of science and technology as well as the dilemmas they create.

The social and behavioral sciences focus more directly on understanding society and the individual. In these courses, students will have the opportunity to apply various methods of inquiry and analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, to the study of the human condition. These sciences emphasize the importance of understanding the diversity of human cultures, their socio-historical context, and one's personal responsibility for being not only a good citizen, but also a steward of the environment.

The humanities provide sources and methods for reflection upon human experience in its historical, literary, philosophical, and religious dimensions. The basis of instruction in these disciplines is

primarily the interpretation and critical analysis of written texts. The goal of humanities courses is to provide students with the foundations and methods necessary for a critical understanding of languages, cultures, and traditions, including those that are different from their own.

Courses in the fine arts provide students with a basis for understanding and evaluating musical, theatrical, and visual works in terms of their production and aesthetic reception. In these areas students learn to apply historical, philosophical, and critical concepts to specific works and genres. The goal of instruction in the fine arts is to provide students with the foundations and methods necessary for a critical appreciation of various artistic and aesthetic traditions, as well as the evaluation of particular musical, theatrical, or visual works.

In the general education program students explore the variety of ways of knowing through the disciplinary foundations of a liberal arts education. These courses help students become more mindful of the relationships among self, society, and the environment. Such preparation is vital as society becomes more complex, interdependent, and reflective of diversity. Collectively, the courses in general education encourage students to develop critical and reflective thinking as an intellectual habit.

Responsible Global Citizenship

The general education curriculum is also designed to develop and strengthen those attitudes and behaviors integral to responsible global citizenship—ethical behavior, civic participation, an understanding of history, and an appreciation of diversity both at home and abroad. Responsible citizens not only comprehend world-shaping forces and events and the varied experiences that have shaped human culture, but also use that understanding to make informed, objective, and ethical decisions. They understand their responsibility as educated members of society and actively participate in their communities. Finally, responsible global citizens appreciate the diversity of the world in which they work and live. As part of their general education program, all students are required to complete a course with a focus on cultural diversity.

Writing Across the General Education Curriculum

All of Eastern's general education courses require writing. Four of these courses--English 1001G and 1002G and their honors equivalents, 1091G and 1092G--are writing-centered. In these courses students learn the principles and the process of writing in all of its stages, from inception to completion. The quality of students' writing is the principal determinant of the course grade. The minimum writing requirement is 20 pages (5,000 words).

Other general education courses, including all senior seminars, are writing-intensive. In such courses several writing assignments and writing activities are required. These assignments and activities, which are to be spread over the course of the semester, serve the dual purpose of strengthening writing skills and deepening understanding of course content. At least one writing assignment is to be revised by the student after it has been read and commented on by the instructor. In writing-intensive courses the quality of students' writing should constitute no less than 35% of the final course grade.

Remaining general education courses are writing-active. In writing-active courses, frequent, brief writing activities and assignments are required. Such activities -- some of which are to be graded -- might include five-minute in-class writing assignments, journal keeping, lab reports, essay examinations, short papers, longer papers, or a variety of other writing-to-learn activities of the instructor's invention. Writing assignments and activities in writing-active courses are designed

primarily to assist students in mastering course content, secondarily to strengthen students' writing skills.

Assessment and General Education

The General Education program is constantly undergoing assessment by the faculty who participate in it. The Committee for the Assessment of Student Learning (CASL) coordinates these activities and provides recommendations to the Council on Academic Affairs relative to student learning in the program.

The Illinois Articulation Initiative

Eastern Illinois University is a participant in the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), a statewide agreement that allows transfer of the completed Illinois General Education Core Curriculum between participating institutions. Completion of the transferable General Education Core Curriculum at any participating college or university in Illinois assures transferring students that lower-division general education requirements for an associate or bachelor's degree have been satisfied. This agreement is in effect for students entering an associate or baccalaureate degree-granting institution as first-time freshmen in summer 1998 (and thereafter). In the "Course Descriptions" section of the catalog, the following codes identify qualifying general education courses: IAI C (Communication), IAI F (Fine Arts), IAI M (Mathematics), IAI P (Physical Sciences), IAI S (Social/Behavioral Sciences). The following codes identify qualifying baccalaureate majors: AG (Agriculture), ART (Art and Art Education), EED (Elementary Education), EGR (Engineering), PSY (Psychology), and SED (Secondary Education). For more information, visit the IAI website: <http://www.itransfer.org/IAI/>.

Please note that all students must earn a "C" or better in English 1001G, English 1002G, and Speech Communication 1310G or in accepted substitutions.

APPENDIX C

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

"Generally speaking, the courses CAA has identified as meeting the cultural diversity requirement are ones that offer students the opportunity to learn how to appropriately and effectively interact with people of different cultures. The key here is that these courses potentially influence students' behaviors, not just their attitudes toward or their knowledge of other cultures. One of their side effects-if not outright objectives-is to provide students with the materials to live and work with people who are different from them."

CAA Executive Committee, April 2001

APPENDIX D

SENIOR SEMINAR MISSION

Adopted by CAA, March 2, 2000

with minor modifications based on CAA actions (February 22, 2001 and April 26, 2001)

Definition

The Senior Seminar at Eastern Illinois University is designed to be a cross-disciplinary culminating experience that will provide students with an opportunity to apply concepts and use skills developed in both their general education and major courses. Information about topics of major importance (e.g. the Holocaust, Social Movements, Women in Science, Technology, Controversies in Education, Sociobiology, etc.) will be read, analyzed, discussed, and written about in a three semester-hour seminar led by a faculty member of a discipline different from those of the students. To allow ample time for writing and discussion, senior seminars will be limited to a maximum of 25 students. As an element of the general education curriculum, each senior seminar shall focus on some aspect of citizenship.

Rationale

The purpose of Senior Seminar is to broaden the educational experience for seniors using a cross-disciplinary, synthesizing approach. Under the guidance of a faculty member from a department other than their own, students of various majors will come together to read, discuss, and write about the topic of the individual seminar.

This experience will afford an ideal opportunity for students to reflect on their particular education in the light of a range of cross-disciplinary concerns which will be available in senior seminars each semester. The exposure to another discipline's viewpoint on an issue as provided by the faculty member, coupled with the cross-disciplinary flavor provided by the mixture of students from different disciplines, should create an ideal atmosphere for broadening views and judging the applicability as well as the limits of one's training toward the understanding and resolving of problems which are truly cross-disciplinary in scope.

Objectives

The senior seminar should give students experiences in synthesizing, analyzing, and refining ideas/concepts while practicing oral and written communication. To this end, students will

- have the opportunity to obtain information on a topic from a variety of written sources, some including quantitative data.
- demonstrate their critical thinking skills by processing information from diverse sources.
- practice their ability to conduct a rational dialogue with others on topics generated by course materials and outside research.
- express in written and oral forms their synthesis of a topic and a reasoned defense of conclusions flowing from the synthesis.
- bring the skills and viewpoints acquired in their major curricula to bear on problems/situations not directly studied in their major field.
- find links between their formal course work and contemporary problems/events.
- learn to analyze their own views in light of readings and discussions in order to make informed, responsible, and ethical civic and personal decisions.

Assessment

The Senior Seminar carries three hours of credit because:

- students realize the course's intellectual rigor
- faculty have adequate time to deliver a challenging course whose credit hours parallel other senior-level offerings, and
- it facilitates senior-level assessment of general education.

In senior seminar, at least three activities will assess student learning throughout the general education curriculum. The Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, a standardized instrument designed to measure critical thinking, will be given in all senior seminars in week 12 (or its equivalent in summer sessions). A written assignment will be submitted for the students' electronic writing portfolio. Therefore, writing seminars are classified as writing intensive (at least 35 percent of the course grades is based on written work; and at least one writing assignment is to be revised by the student after it has been read and commented on by the instructor). In addition, instructors will assess students' oral communication proficiency. Each new or revised senior seminar must include evidence of assessment and address all three goals of Eastern's general education curriculum—literacy, critical thinking, citizenship.

Assessment of an individual senior seminar course is the responsibility of the instructor and should be based on the instructor's established learning objectives for the course.

Weekend Senior Seminars:

Senior seminars that meet on weekends must meet a minimum of three or four weekends, preferably with open weekends in between, to facilitate the writing component of senior seminar and to provide adequate time for readings, oral discussions, and oral presentations.

Web-Enhanced Senior Seminars

Web-enhanced senior seminars are permitted as long as writing exercises and oral presentations are facilitated and arrangements are made for administration of the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal. There must be a minimum number of face-to-face contact hours to facilitate these items.

Technology-delivered Senior Seminar Policy

Oral communication, identified by both employers and graduates as an area in which better preparation is needed, is an integral part of the senior seminar experience. The EIU Senior Seminar, with its cross-disciplinary focus and small class size is an ideal site for the practice and enhancement of these speaking skills. The course thus has been designed to provide ample opportunity for class discussion and both informal and formal oral presentation. In addition, because of this focus on speaking and discussing, the senior seminar has been chosen as a site for the assessment of student oral communication skills.

Web-based Learning Networks, whether asynchronous or synchronous, while providing the opportunity to practice communication, are centered around writing and keyboarding skills, and, at present, cannot provide an equivalent oral component. The Senior Seminar Advisory Committee recommended that no EIU Senior Seminar be offered entirely in a web-based format on April 18, 2001 (effective Summer 2001).

Approval of Senior Seminars

Senior seminars must be approved by college curriculum committees before being submitted to CAA. It is recommended that department chairs be advised when a new senior seminar is developed. College deans may require that senior seminars be reviewed by departmental curriculum committees.

APPENDIX E

LIST OF SENIOR SEMINARS AND SPONSORING DEPARTMENTS (FALL2004)

- EIU 4100G - Folklore, Culture, and Society --English
- EIU 4101G - Spaceship Earth: The Present State--Geography/Geology
- EIU 4102G - Technology and Society--Technology
- EIU 4103G - Physical Activity and Mental Wellness--Physical Education
- EIU 4104G - World Film: Language and Culture in Film--Foreign Languages
- EIU 4105G - Controversial Issues in Education--Secondary Education and Foundations
- EIU 4106G - War Stories--English
- EIU 4107G - The Idea of a University: Yesterday and Today--Secondary Education and Foundations
- EIU 4108G - The Changing World of Women—Women’s Studies
- EIU 4109G - The Politics of Human Rights--Political Science
- EIU 4110G - Frontiers of Communication--Communication Studies
- EIU 4111G - Plants and Civilizations--Biological Sciences
- EIU 4112G - Women and Technology--Technology
- EIU 4113G - The European Union: A Multi-cultural Approach--Foreign Languages
- EIU 4118G - Sociobiology: The Biological Origins of Social Practices--Biological Sciences
- EIU 4121G - Leisure Time: The American Perspective--Recreation Administration
- EIU 4123G - Social Movements, Crowds, and Violence--Sociology/Anthropology
- EIU 4125G - Cultural Diversity in the United States--Foreign Languages
- EIU 4126G - Body, Health, and Society--Health Studies
- EIU 4128G - Politics and Popular Culture--Political Science
- EIU 4129G - Law and Technology--Business
- EIU 4131G - Modern Biomedical Science: Promise and Problems--Biological Sciences
- EIU 4142G - Telecommunication Issues in the Third Millennium--Communication Studies

EIU 4151G - Nutritional Dilemmas and Decisions--Family and Consumer Sciences

EIU 4155G - The European Witchhunts--History

EIU 4157G - Impact of Communication Deficits: Adjusting to Cultural Demands--Communication Disorders and Sciences

EIU 4160G - Personal Financial Investments--Business

EIU 4161G - Theatre as a Soapbox--Theatre

EIU 4162G - Women's Voices: Women in the Theatre—Theatre

EIU 4165G - Journalistic Media in Society--Journalism

EIU 4167G - The Meaning of Life--Philosophy

EIU 4168G - The Internet as a Social Phenomenon--Business

EIU 4169G - Women in Science--Biological Sciences

EIU 4170G - History on Film--History

EIU 4190G - Spaceship Earth: The Present State, Honors--Geography/Geology

EIU 4191G - Leisure Time: The American Perspective, Honors--Recreation Administration

EIU 4192G - Film and Contemporary Society, Honors--English

EIU 4193G - The Holocaust, Honors--History

EIU 4194G - Leadership: Theory and Practice, Honors—Honors College

EIU 4195G - The European Witchhunts, Honors--History

EIU 4196G - Journalistic Media in Society, Honors--Journalism

EIU 4197G - Freedom of Expression: Dissent, Hate, and Heresy, Honors--Communication Studies and Journalism

EIU 4199G - The Politics of Human Rights, Honors--Political Science