

# **Foundation of Knowledge** **The NKU General Education Program**

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## **Program Mission Statement**

The General Education Program at Northern Kentucky University guides students to become independent learners, innovative thinkers, and responsible citizens. The program gives students a foundation of values, knowledge, and skills that will empower them to discover their personal potential, communicate effectively, work in diverse communities, and solve problems in a global society. Courses in the program will invite students to expand the life-long practice of asking questions, seeking new points of view, applying principles of reason, adjusting ideas in relation to new situations, and taking reflective action.

## Background

This proposal represents the culminating effort of more than a year of a faculty-driven reinvestigation of the NKU general education structure. Beginning in September 2008, the General Education Exploratory Committee (GEEC) received input from faculty through a series of town halls and an online survey. Utilizing this input and examining multiple general education programs at other institutions, the GEEC produced a report in the spring of 2009 that suggested program goals and student learning outcomes for an updated NKU general education program. These programmatic components were necessary in light of recommendation from SACS that NKU create an assessable general education program. In July 2009 the General Education Program Structure Committee (GEPSC) was assembled with a broad representation of faculty and administrators across the various NKU colleges. Using the GEEC report as a foundation, the GEPSC formed three subcommittees, each charged to create a possible general education program for consideration. From the beginning, this effort has attempted to build on the strengths of the present general education program and has sought to emphasize the enduring value of a Liberal Arts education. The three proposals produced by these subcommittees was distributed to the NKU faculty prior to the start of the fall 2009 academic term for review and discussion. Feedback was submitted to the GEPSC in a variety of forms (including an online survey), and a refinement subcommittee utilized this feedback and the three subcommittee proposals to produce a single general education program proposal (the current document) for consideration and possible adoption through faculty governance and the Board of Regents.

## Program Goals

### **A – Critical Thinking**

Students will demonstrate the ability to gather, process, interpret, and evaluate information; to develop a plan to apply that information appropriate to a variety of situations, and to assess the appropriateness and relevance of its application.

### **B – Perspectives**

Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze and understand multiple historical and contemporary perspectives and cultural identities.

### **C – Communication**

Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate a depth of understanding of that information through written, spoken, and visual media appropriate to audiences.

### **D – Science and Technology**

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the scientific method in observing, evaluating, analyzing, and predicting phenomena in the natural and physical world. In addition, they will give example applications of science and technology to real world situations.

### **E – Personal Responsibility and Community**

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the ethical, moral, and pragmatic consequences of their choices and decisions, including the roles and responsibilities of citizenship.

## Program Structure

Course Category	Credit Hours
Communication	
<b>Oral</b>	3
<b>Written</b>	6
Scientific and Quantitative Inquiry <sup>b</sup>	
<b>Natural Sciences (one lab course)</b>	7 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Mathematics and Statistics</b>	3
Culture and Creativity (Arts and Humanities) <sup>b,c</sup>	6
Self and Society (Social and Behavioral Sciences) <sup>b,c</sup>	
<b>Cultural Pluralism</b>	3
<b>Individual and Society</b>	6
Elective in Global Viewpoints <sup>b,d</sup>	3
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>37</b>

<sup>a</sup> One of the courses that fulfill this category must have a laboratory component.

<sup>b</sup> In meeting the “Culture and Creativity”, “Scientific and Quantitative Inquiry” and “Self and Society” requirements, students may take only one course from any given discipline. A second course from that discipline may be used to meet the “Global Perspectives” requirement.

<sup>c</sup> These discipline designations indicate possible disciplinary areas that could have certified courses in these categories, but they should not be considered as the only areas for these categories.

<sup>d</sup> Recognizing that global viewpoints can be explored both from the perspective of the arts/humanities and the social/behavioral sciences, courses in this category will satisfy **both** the baseline SLOs from the appropriate category of Culture and Creativity or Self and Society as well as additional SLOs relevant to Global Viewpoints

(see SLO matrix for further details). Students may not “double dip” to fulfill their general education requirements (e.g., a student may not satisfy both this category and the Culture and Creativity category with a single course).

## Kentucky Transfer Module

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) developed the most recent version of the Kentucky Transfer Module (KTM) in 2005. The KTM facilitates student progress to graduation and eases transfer between member institutions. Therefore, CPE expects each member institution to map their general education programs to the five broadly defined KTM categories and the minimum specified credit hours. The proposed NKU general education program meets these KTM requirements as indicated below. It is our understanding that the KTM does not specify disciplines that meet the various area requirements. The UCC has the authority to designate disciplinary areas outside of those commonly associated with these area requirements, in consultation with the NKU Office of Curriculum, Accreditation, and Assessment, that might propose courses for this new structure.

KTM Category	Proposed NKU Gen Ed Category
Communication <b>Oral (3 credit hr)</b> <b>Written (6 credit hr)</b>	Communication Oral (3 credit hr) Written (6 credit hr)
Humanities (6 credit hr)	Culture and Creativity (6 credit hr)
Mathematics (3 credit hr)	Mathematics and Statistics (3 credit hr)
Natural Sciences (6 credit hr)	Natural Sciences (7 credit hr)
Behavioral and Social Sciences (9 credit hr)	Self and Society (9 credit hr)
Not in KTM	Elective in Global Viewpoints (3 credit hr)

## Program Student Learning Outcomes

A primary focus of both GEEC and GEPSC was to conduct an in-depth examination of the basic skills and knowledge expected of every NKU graduate. This examination led to the program mission statement and goals stated previously in this proposal. Furthermore, these goals are further specified as student learning outcomes (SLOs), as outlined in the matrices below. For each course category in the proposed general education program, there are a minimum number of SLOs that students are expected to fulfill as a result of successfully completing a course in that category. Course SLOs will be refined by a subsequent committee for eventual ratification by UCC. There will be a) *at most* 6 SLOs that are required to be assessed in each course category and b) each SLO is assessed in *only* 3 or 4 course categories. Certified courses may address additional SLOs as instructors see fit, but the indicated SLOs are those that must be assessed (see subsequent sections for further information).

A – Critical Thinking	Com – Oral	Com – Written	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lect)	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lab)	S&QI – Math & Stat	Culture & Creativity	S&S – Cult Plural	S&S – Indiv & Soc	Elect Glob View
<b>A.1. Students effectively gather material relating to a focused topic, using a variety of tools, sources and search strategies.</b>									
<b>A.2. Students use appropriate modes of inquiry and logic to distinguish between facts, assumptions, opinions, and theories.</b>									
<b>A.3. Students develop evidence-based arguments.</b>									
<b>A.4. Students use their initial conclusions to generate new ideas.</b>									

B – Perspectives	Com – Oral	Com – Written	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lect)	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lab)	S&QI – Math & Stat	Culture & Creativity	S&S – Cult Plural	S&S – Indiv & Soc	Elect Glob View
B.1. Students understand economic, political, and social legacies of imperialism and colonialism, with reference to linguistic or cultural diversity, for societies, groups, and individuals.									
B.2. Students compare historical perspectives on the development of various cultures.									
B.3. Students identify the connections between and differences among local, national and global communities.									
B.4. Students demonstrate how literature and the arts reflect and influence cultures.									
C – Communication	Com – Oral	Com – Written	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lect)	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lab)	S&QI – Math & Stat	Culture & Creativity	S&S – Cult Plural	S&S – Indiv & Soc	Elect Glob View
C.1. Students demonstrate the ability to express ideas using oral communication skills with attention to topic and audience									
C.2. Students create and write coherent, grammatical pieces for a variety of topics and audiences.									
C.3. Students employ the principles of rhetorical communication.									
C.4. Students comprehend college-level readings in various settings and disciplines.									
C.5. Students use information technologies appropriately and effectively in their written, spoken, and visual									

**communication of information.**

D – Science and Technology	Com – Oral	Com – Written	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lect)	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lab)	S&QI – Math & Stat	Culture & Creativity	S&S – Cult Plural	S&S – Indiv & Soc	Elect Glob View
D.1. Students apply scientific reasoning by designing experiments and effectively communicating scientific results through written, graphical, visual, and numerical means.									
D.2. Students identify major concepts of science behind technological innovations or applications in our daily lives.									
D.3. Students distinguish between scientific and non-science explanations by employing scientific methods.									
E – Personal Responsibility and Community	Com – Oral	Com – Written	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lect)	S&QI – Nat Sci (Lab)	S&QI – Math & Stat	Culture & Creativity	S&S – Cult Plural	S&S – Indiv & Soc	Elect Glob View
E.1. Students comprehend the ethical perspectives and responsibilities of all individuals.									
E.2. Students understand the influence of cultural and socioeconomic background in shaping attitudes and opinions (in themselves and others).									
E.3. Students demonstrate an understanding of the variety of influences on human behavior, thought, or feeling.									

## Course Certification

While the charge of both GEEC and GEPSC did not specifically request policy for the process of implementing and maintaining the proposed general education program, several of the GEPSC subcommittees chose to include some ideas in their proposals. We feel it necessary to develop such policy simultaneously with the proposed program structure, and offer the following suggested guidelines for further discussion:

- The UCC and college curriculum committees will be responsible for general education course certification.
- Certified general education courses must be offered at least once every academic year.
- Faculty submitting courses for general education certification must address in their application paperwork how the baseline SLOs for their submission category will be addressed. Assessment methodologies for these SLOs must also be presented.
- Faculty must submit a syllabus for each course certification proposal that clearly indicates the SLOs and assessment methodologies, along with some indication as to how multiple section offerings of the course will support these statements.
- Courses may only be certified in a single category, unless the course is listed in both the “Elective in Global Viewpoints” category and the “Culture and Creativity” or “Self and Society” categories.
- Following initial certification, all general education courses must be recertified every four years. To be considered for recertification, faculty must provide assessment results to demonstrate that students have mastered the baseline SLOs to some proficiency.

## Program Assessment

A key component of the proposed program is the focus on assessment of the program SLOs within the certified general education courses. These SLOs will be emphasized to the student in course syllabi, and both direct and indirect assessment tools will be utilized. Assessment matrices will be developed for each SLO (a representative matrix is provided below). There will be significant university support e.g., a general education director, the NKU Office of Curriculum, Accreditation, and Assessment, etc.) to facilitate assessment to minimize faculty burden in the process. Furthermore, a “deep assessment” of a single program goal will be conducted every year (on a five year cycle).

SLO	Marginal Proficiency	Some Proficiency	Proficiency
<b>A.1. Students effectively gather material relating to a focused topic, using a variety of tools, sources and search strategies.</b>	Gathers some appropriate material but includes other materials from insufficient and/or inappropriate sources.	Gathers some material from mostly appropriate sources.	Gathers material from a wide variety of appropriate sources using effective search strategies.
<b>A.2. Students use appropriate modes of inquiry and logic to distinguish between facts, assumptions, opinions, and theories.</b>	Identifies the forms of fact, assumptions, opinions, and theories.	Differentiates between facts, assumptions, opinions, and theories.	Thoroughly considers all relevant points of view applying appropriate modes of inquiry and logic; selects relevant data and evidence to evaluate credibility.
<b>A.3. Students make evidence-based arguments.</b>	Limited defense based on weak or unsupported conclusions using inappropriate or insufficient presentation methods.	Provides defense of analysis and conclusions using some presentation methods.	Thoughtfully analyzes and evaluates analyses and conclusions using multiple presentations methods appropriate for the content and target audiences.
<b>A.4. Students use their initial conclusions to</b>	Does not identify meaningful new directions.	Identifies some new questions and/or directions but does not	Synthesizes new information, ideas, and/or innovations, and

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**generate new  
ideas.**

address them.

identifies appropriate  
future directions of  
inquiry.

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