

GENERAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
AGENDA
February 13, 2020

Present: Evan Davis, Cristina Gonzalez, Carol Jones, Amy Martindale, Mindy McCann, Tammy Mix, Marianna Patrauchan, Joe Schatzer, and Bridget Miller (chair)

1. Comments from a Faculty Member – received in Academic Affairs and shared with GEAC

A NOTE ON GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE WRITING REQUIREMENTS

It has come to my attention that the GEAC has sent back for clarification certain General Education course syllabi which impose grade penalties on writing assignments that are less than the minimum required length (either 5 or 10 pages). It has been suggested that this would allow students to obtain Gen Ed credit for a course without writing the full minimum number of pages required. But I would like to point out that under the GEAC's own rules it is entirely possible for students in many courses to receive Gen Ed credit without writing ANYTHING at all. Please consider this provision, labeled c-1, which occurs in the new requirements for H, S, D, and I designated courses:

"Writing assignments must be weighted in the grading scheme such that students are discouraged from skipping the assignment (i.e. writing assignments are worth a minimum of 10% of the overall grade)."

This means that a student could easily decide to skip the Writing Assignment(s) altogether and "swallow" a 10% grade loss. Under most grading rubrics, if 90% of the total possible grade is still obtainable, this would mean that the student could easily get a final grade of D, C, or B (and in some cases, even an A) and thus receive Gen Ed credit for the course while writing nothing. The only way I can see to prevent this is to insert a clause in the course syllabus similar to the one I include in all of mine:

"All work must be completed in order to earn a passing grade."

I hesitate to recommend this draconian clause to all instructors; I believe that it should be up to the individual instructor to decide the most fundamental of grading decisions – who passes and who fails.

This is, of course, in addition to the GEAC's extreme vagueness in defining the length of writing assignments in terms of the number of "pages" – which can vary greatly in the amount of text included per page. Depending on factors such as margin size, line spacing, font selection, font size, and character spacing, a student can greatly increase or decrease the amount of text on any given page. A requirement for a certain minimum number of words might be more precise and easier to follow.

Perhaps it would be best for the GEAC to place greater trust in each instructor's sense of integrity concerning his or her own course and how to police its requirements, rather than to attempt to micromanage grading decisions and take away the instructor's prerogatives. The GEAC would do well to have more faith in the good intentions of OSU instructors.

2. New General Education Designation Requests:

GEOG 3910 – Geography of Religion, requests the "S and D" designations, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

Members approved the "S and D" designations, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

HESA 3910 – International Perspectives in Ethical Leadership, requests the "I" designation, one-time only, effective Summer 2020.

Members approved the "I" designation, one-time only, effective Summer 2020.

DHM 4131 – Spirituality and Sustainability, requests the "D" designation, effective Fall 2020.

Members denied the "D" designation as it was unclear how the course met the "D" requirements throughout the entire course. Members encouraged elaboration on the direct correlation to the diversity requirements

(below). Writing assignments should be critically focused and not merely reflective. Members also noted that since the course was for one credit hour the entire course and writing assignment(s) must be entirely related to present day diversity in the U.S.

DIVERSITY - (D)

1. Purpose:

Courses designated “D” prepare students for engaged citizenship in the diverse, multicultural society of the United States.

2. Requirements:

Students will reflect on identity through the examination of one or more underrepresented groups (e.g. racial, ethnic, religious, social class, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation) in present day United States.

- Students will examine the ways underrepresented groups define and express themselves and the context in which these definitions are constructed.
- Students will critically analyze theories and systems of cultural, societal, political, or economic power.
- Students will demonstrate their understanding through written work that provides them the opportunity to enhance their writing skills; upper division “D” courses will include extensive written work.
- Writing assignments must be weighted in the grading scheme such that students are discouraged from skipping the assignment (i.e. writing assignments are worth a minimum 10% of the overall grade).
- Writing assignments must be tied to the purpose/requirements of the “D” designation.
- The minimum required number of pages may be encompassed in one or multiple assignment/s. Informal writing assignments (like journals or class notes) and group projects will not count toward writing minimum. Multiple drafts of the same work cannot be counted twice in the cumulative page minimum.
- Lower-division courses must include at least five pages of out-of-class written assignments or essays.
- Upper-division courses must include at least ten pages of out-of-class written assignments or essays. Instructors must provide feedback that students can incorporate in subsequent writing assignments (by revising and resubmitting a single assignment or submitting multiple assignments). At least one writing assignment must be at least 4 pages in length.

In courses worth three or more credit hours, at least one-half of the course materials must relate to one or more underrepresented groups. A course that is fewer than three hours must be entirely devoted to these groups. A detailed class schedule should be included on the course syllabus to confirm content minimum has clearly been met.

HONR 1000 – Class, Inequality, and American Democracy, requests the “S and D” designations, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

Members approved the “S and D” designations, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

HONR 1000 - Living in Space, requests the “N” designation, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

Members approved the “N” designation, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

HONR 1000 – Plantation to Plate: Sugar, Bananas, and Coffee in the Americas, requests the “H and I” designations, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

Members approved the “H and I” designations, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

HONR 1000 – Sex in College Culture, requests the “S and D” designations, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

Members approved the “S and D” designations, one-time only, effective Fall 2020.

POLS 4333 - Improving Democracy: How to Reform Government by the People, requests the “S” designation, effective Fall 2020.

Members approved the “S” designation, effective Fall 2020.

3. Five Year Review of the “H” General Education Designations Approved Pending:

ARCH 2003 – Architecture and Society, requests continuation of the “H and I” designations, effective Spring 2020.

11/8/18 - Members approved continuation of the “H and I” designations pending receipt of a syllabus clarifying the 5 page writing requirement.

Received revised syllabus.

2/13/20 - Members approved continuation of the “H and I” designations, effective Spring 2020.

4. Five Year Review of the “H” General Education Designations:

HIST 4153 – African American History to 1865, requests continuation of the “H and D” designations, effective Spring 2020.

3/14/19 - Members tabled pending clarification that the course content meets the criteria of the “D” designation in that 50% or more of the course must address diverse issues. Members also asked for clarification on the syllabus of the 10 page non-optional writing assignment, comparable to the writing requirements on the online form.

Members approved continuation of the “H and D” designations, effective Spring 2020.

TH 3933 – Theatre History After 1800, requests continuation of the ‘H” designation, effective Spring 2020.

4/25/19 - Members tabled as it appears that the wrong syllabus might have been attached to the application. Received revised syllabus.

Members approved continuation of the ‘H” designation, effective Spring 2020.

5. 2/6/2020 - Members of Instruction Council noted that once a course is approved in the General Education Advisory Council (GEAC) there appears to be little communication regarding the level of expectations/requirements for courses approved for general education credit and assuring that the course is taught with the same expectations/requirements in which it was approved each semester/year regardless of the type of instructor teaching the course.

The idea of messaging those expectations and requirements on a semester basis was proposed. The communications would originate in the Provost Office through the colleges. The messaging would include the “Purpose and Requirements”, “Checklist”, “Cover Sheet”, and a sample syllabus. The communications and sample syllabus example would also be added to the Academic Affairs website with the existing “Purpose and Requirements”, “Checklist”, and cover sheet.

- What type of messaging would be appropriate for this initiative?
- Should syllabi for all designations be provided?

Members agreed that there may be an unintentional breakdown in communications regarding the general education requirements and expectations through the years. Continuity becomes particularly challenging when more than one instructor teaches the general education course and assignments change. Many faculty may not be aware of the requirements and expectations of general education courses unless they were involved in the process of applying for a general education designation.

Members suggested that it might be helpful to create easy to watch, short videos, with the Institute for Teaching and Learning Excellence (ITLE), covering the requirements, checklist, best practices syllabi and general tips for applying for and teaching general education courses.

It was suggested to create messaging from the Provost/Vice Provost to the Deans as well as through the faculty/TA list serve via email around the same time the university syllabus is sent out. The messaging would include emphasizing the importance of general education and how it enhances student awareness and knowledge.

