



## **FAQs FOR THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**February 1, 2011**

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

**Can students use life experience in lieu of a GE requirement?** No

**Can students test out of a GE requirement through a departmental proficiency exam?** No.

**Can we restrict Foundation courses to our major?** No. You can require a course for a certain major or set of majors, but you cannot restrict access to a GE course.

### **PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS**

**Can the professional schools get more of their required course/cognates into the Foundations?** Yes. You need to show how the skill and content goals will be met. The unit needs to complete the on-line curriculum process. Foundation courses need to have few, if any, prerequisites, so even a more targeted course to a major or set of majors would presumably be open to many/most students given the prerequisites.

**Some professional schools don't "see" their majors until the Junior or Senior year. How do we get them "connected" to the major early?** Departments or colleges may want to create learning communities wherein students can connect their experience in GE with their fellow majors. Embedding more courses in the Foundations around a collection of majors is another way.

**Some professional schools don't take the GE Foundations until their junior or senior year. Is there a way to create some more "advanced" Foundation courses (at the 300/400 level)?** Yes. It is just up to units to develop these courses.

### **CONNECTION WITH MAJORS**

**Our major teaches some of the General Education goals. How is that factored in?** At the Foundations level, GE goals serve as an introduction to the skill and knowledge goals that students need. The goals are reinforced and contextualized in the major, the co-curriculum, and in the upper-level GE program.

**Do majors have to also teach the GE goals?** No. Courses in the major are not required to teach the GE goals, but many courses do teach the goals.

### **ASSESSMENT**

**Do we know if students are achieving the current goals?** Overall, students at GVSU are achieving the skill and content goals in the GE program. Each course in General Education assesses student learning for each of the skill and content goals. Go to [www.gvsu.edu/gened](http://www.gvsu.edu/gened) for the current results.

**How do we change GE category content goals?** Any faculty member can email GE ([gened@gvsu.edu](mailto:gened@gvsu.edu)), asking us to convene a meeting with instructors of courses in any category. These members can propose adding, deleting, or changing the content goals. One person will fill out the form asking for the change in wording. The GE office will have each Unit Head sign the change and the form will go to the GE Committee and UCC for approval. At that point the language in the GE Handbook will be changed and all courses in that category will teach and assess the new content goals.

**Will each GE Category have to achieve all of the existing and proposed goals?** No, they will have to meet only the goals assigned to their category. After consulting with faculty about the most natural fit for teaching and assessing goals in their course, the final GE Proposal will detail which goals a category needs to meet. Of course faculty can teach goals that their category is not assigned.

**How will the Foundation and Cultures courses demonstrate how they will meet the new goals?** Each Foundation and Cultures course will submit a new Course Assessment Plan (CAP) to be approved by the GEC. The CAP will show how the course intends to meet the new goals. If the new CAP is not approved by April 1, 2012, the course will be dropped from the GE Program beginning with the Fall 2013 catalog.

**How will GE assessment change for Foundations and Cultures courses?** Currently, courses in each Foundations and Cultures category are responsible for teaching and assessing three skills goals (writing or speaking, critical and creative thinking, and information literacy). We are proposing to add skills goals but distribute them through the program so that courses in each Foundations and Cultures category are responsible for teaching and assessing just two skills goals. See the distribution plan outlined in the proposal at the GE website.

**How will we teach and assess some of the skills goals in large classes?** There are a variety of pedagogies that can be used to effectively teach and assess learning in large classes. The GEC and the FTLC will offer workshops to help with the transition. In some cases, course size may need to be adjusted.

**How will GE assessment change for Theme courses?** Currently, courses in each Theme category are responsible for teaching and assessing five skills goals (writing, speaking, critical and creative thinking, information literacy, and integration). We are proposing the all upper-level courses in the new Global Issues categories be responsible for teaching and assessing three skills goals: integration, teamwork, and problem-solving.

## **WRITING**

**What courses will be included in the new "Writing" Foundations category?** GVSU's freshman writing requirement is not changing. WRT 150, a course that introduces students to college-level writing strategies, academic research, academic genres, and citation and documentation methods, will be the only course in the Writing category so that all students will continue to take the course. If other courses are proposed for the category, they will have to meet the content and skills goals of the category and submit a Course Assessment Plan.

**Will WRT 305 go away?** No. Only the junior-level writing requirement is being eliminated. WRT 305 will still exist as a course, and the Writing department will offer sections of the course to meet demand. If you are interested in discipline-specific versions of WRT 305 (Writing in the Disciplines) or WRT 350 (Business Communication), contact the Writing department.

**How does SWS factor into the GE changes?** The SWS Program is outside the purview of the GE Program. It is an all-university writing across the curriculum requirement administered by the University Writing Skills committee. It is a valuable way to develop student writing by providing writing intensive courses taught in the disciplines by disciplinary faculty with special attention on state of the art pedagogical methods.

## **THEMES**

**What will happen to Themes?** Once the new program is in place in Fall 2013, Themes will no longer exist. The upper-division GE component will be fulfilled by Global Issues courses instead of Themes.

**What will happen to my Theme Course?** It will be up to each department if they would like to propose courses for the new upper division component. Each course will need to demonstrate a connection to one of the proposed Global Issues and show how it will meet the integration, teamwork, and problem-solving goals.

**What will be the process to get a course into the upper-division component?** All courses will need to do a Course Change or a New Course Proposal and the General Education Form, including a Course Assessment Plan. The proposal will follow the on-line curricular process (unit head, college curriculum committee, Dean, GE Committee, UCC, Provost). We are developing a streamlined version of this process to accommodate the number of proposals we are likely to see in 2011-12.

## **THE NEW UPPER DIVISION COMPONENT**

**Can 100/200 level courses be in the upper-division component?** No. All courses must be at the 300/400 level.

**Can a student fulfill the upper division requirement in transfer?** No. Because the upper-division component courses will have a significant focus on skill development and less of a focus on content, transfer courses will not be used to satisfy the upper-division requirement.

**What are the Upper Division Categories?** The focus of the upper-division component is on big contemporary issues that potentially affect the entire world. Courses with a historical focus will need to demonstrate a connection to current issues.

The GE Committee is proposing seven topical areas:

1. *Health and Human Development*
2. *Sustainability*
3. *Globalization*
4. *Citizenship*
5. *Identity and Culture*
6. *Religion*
7. *Communication and Media*

All of these focus on large issues with global impact. All courses in the category must also focus on achieving integration, teamwork and problem-solving.

**How will the new GE 400-level Seminar work?** The GEC will create a new 400-level course, each with a GE prefix, for each Global Issues category. Faculty can then propose specific sections of the course that will in some way address the Global Issue. In the Sustainability category, for example, a faculty member might propose a course focusing on water. The course will then be similar to a government commission convened to address a specific problem. Students from multiple disciplines will come together to analyze a problem and propose a solution that integrates ideas from several disciplines into a solution.

**If we drop from 3 to 2 courses in the upper division component of GE, is that enough exposure to the issue?** The proposed revision focuses more on developing the skills of integration, teamwork, and problem-solving than on developing content expertise. The course content and global issues provide a platform for practicing the skills. The idea is to give students practice at integrating previous knowledge with new knowledge and working with others to address problems that go beyond any one field of study.

**If students can take courses from more than one Global Issue, why should we even have categories?** The categories help students determine which courses are more closely aligned with their interest. The categories also help faculty develop or modify their course to best prepare students to “shape their lives, their profession, and their societies.”

**Will the students have the disciplinary knowledge to effectively represent the guiding principles of their discipline?** One reason the Global Issues courses are at the upper division is that juniors and seniors will have taken more courses in their major. Part of the goal of the upper-level component is to give students practice drawing upon what they have learned and applying it to a new situation. That said, students’ disciplinary knowledge is just one of the items that inform their perspectives. We expect students to bring all of their perspectives to the group.

**How will a department know how many sections of a Global Issues courses to schedule?** We don’t know how many sections will be needed of any particular course. Because the incoming freshmen in 2013 won’t be enrolled in Global Issues until 2015, we will begin to get a sense for student interest in the Global Issues as the students enrolled in Themes also have the opportunity to take Global Issues course.

**Can Global Issues courses have prerequisites?** Like current Themes courses, these courses can have limited prerequisites. All courses should be accessible to a variety of majors.

**Can a Global Issues course double dip in the Foundations? What about the Cultures?** Global Issues courses won’t double-dip in the Foundations, but like Theme courses they will be able to double-dip with either Cultures category (U.S. Diversity or World Perspectives).

**Can a Global Issues course count in the major?** That decision is up to the Unit.

**How does Study Abroad fit into Global Issues?** Padnos International Center is developing a proposal for how the study abroad experience could be incorporated into Global Issues. More details will be posted as they develop their proposal.

## **TIME LINE**

Feb. 1, 2011	GEC distributes preliminary proposal to the campus community
Feb.-April 2011	Campus conversations
April 2011	GEC submits revised proposal to Faculty Governance
Sept. 2011	Anticipated approval of the new GE Program Faculty development opportunities once the proposal passes Governance Transition plan for students currently in Themes
Oct. 2011	GEC begins accepting Course Assessment Plans for Foundations and Cultures courses Faculty begin submitting courses for Global Issues to the on-line curriculum process
Feb. 2012	Deadline for approval of Course Assessment Plans for Foundations and Cultures courses
Oct. 2012	Deadline for approval of the initial Global Issues courses (to meet unit scheduling deadline for 2013-14)
Aug. 2013	Incoming freshmen/transfer students are using the Global Issues Incoming freshmen/transfer students take the new Foundations and Cultures courses

## **TRANSITION PLAN**

When governance approval is received for the new GE Program, the following will happen:

1. Effective the semester after the GE proposal is approved by faculty governance, the Theme requirement for all current students would drop from 3 to 2 courses and students would be able to take courses from more than one Theme. To meet their General Education requirements, students will have three ways to fulfill their Theme requirement:

- Take any 2 Theme courses (these may be from different Themes, but they must be from two different disciplines)
- Take 2 Global Issues courses (from two different disciplines)
- Take 1 Global Issue course and 1 Theme course

Also effective the semester after the GE proposal is approved by faculty governance, students will be able to take the Foundations and Cultures courses from either the old GE categories or from the new GE Foundations and Cultures categories.

2. In Fall 2013, incoming freshmen and transfer students:

- will take Global Issues courses
- will take Foundations and Cultures courses from the revised list (courses that have approved new CAPs demonstrating how they'll meet the new category skills goals)