

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are we revising general education?

The General Education Program at UMKC is being revised to provide students with an opportunity to enhance their capacity for intellectual inquiry and discovery, critical reasoning, and effective communication. These abilities are essential in assisting all students to become lifelong learners and to provide them with the opportunity to be successful in their chosen fields. The eight faculty approved Student Learning Outcomes provide the foundation for this program and the fulfillment of the University mission.

The goals of general education revision at UMKC are

- to increase student engagement, thereby increasing student retention and persistence;*
- provide an opportunity to define the student learning outcomes for general education and the mechanisms to assess the achievement of the outcomes so that continuous improvements can be made; and*
- facilitate transfer from other higher education institutions and between academic units within UMKC.*
- to ensure alignment with state and national guidelines for general education.*

Why 30 hours?

The Higher Learning Commission reviews its Criteria for Accreditation approximately every five years. The latest “gamma” version of the Criteria for Accreditation outlines assumed practices (minimum expectations) for institutions of higher learning. The expectation of the Higher Learning Commission regarding undergraduate general education is that an institution maintains a minimum requirement of 30 credit hours of general education for all undergraduate bachelor’s degrees.

Will students need to complete the 30 hours in the first two years? *No. We will encourage students to complete their general education courses as early as possible but there may be*

times when students are unable to complete all of the courses in the first two years because of degree requirements in their program.

Are we adding an additional 30 credit hours of new courses?

No. The 30 credit hours will replace the hours that students take as part of our current general education, and many of our current classes will fit in the revised general education curriculum. There will also be opportunities to develop new courses that fit into the general education guidelines.

Would current general education classes count towards the revised general education curriculum? *Yes, as long as they meet the requirements, address the learning outcomes, and make it through the approval process.*

How would this be different from what we currently have?

What are some examples of the models? The new model is meant to highlight the interdisciplinary strengths of the University and allow students to broadly explore educational content that spans academic units. One way in which we are doing this is by developing room in the model for team-taught courses that explore novel content in interesting and unique ways. Another way we are doing this is by discussing changes to the traditional writing and speech courses that “link” the content of these courses together more tightly and give instructors more opportunities to interact with students to improve their discourse skills. In one model, for example, a “capstone” high-impact learning experience course would exist where students engaged in some hands-on learning activity would utilize their experience to write an essay, design a website, or other activity that allows them to reflectively apply their new-found knowledge. While many of the courses that are already being taught might fit directly into the new Gen Ed structure, we are trying to build in opportunities to align course content to fit expectations across a set of courses- this would allow assessment to apply more evenly, but would also allow instructors to set up courses with

appropriately challenging levels of compelling material for students to engage with.

What are the financial ramifications? Is this a way of cutting costs? Will anyone lose a job? *We are primarily concerned with what is best for students, ensuring quality education, the value of their degrees, and their ability to function well in today's global society. One of the goals of general education revision is to increase student engagement, and thereby retention and persistence. If this goal is reached, with our current budget model, academic units will stand to benefit financially. There is no intention to cut any jobs as a direct result of general education revision.*

Will units be encouraged to teach courses that have been traditionally taught by others? *All faculty will be encouraged to be creative in meeting the student learning outcomes, incorporating high-impact and interdisciplinary practices into courses. Team-teaching and innovation are highly encouraged.*

How much would what we are doing now count [in the new gen eds]? How much would have to be added? *This will depend on how well current courses provide learning opportunities for, and assessment of, the eight student learning outcomes. If current courses meet the criteria, they will count. Some may need to be revised, and some will need to be added. This question cannot be answered fully at this time.*

Why don't we wait and see what the HLC does and then go from there? *The time for this is now past. We have taken this approach previously and the HLC has now done something. We must make the requested and required changes prior to the next review. If we do not, we will not have the autonomy to make the revisions ourselves.*

Should we take a conservative approach with the smallest "first step" possible? *We have already taken the first step with the creation and approval by the faculty of the eight student*

learning outcomes. The second step was to approve a two-tiered model, with a 30 hour core curriculum in the first tier and a second tier at the unit level, which was recently adopted by the Faculty Senate. The next steps of curriculum design and assessment will now be easier to define and discuss.

What are the details of the next step? What is the timeline?

When will this be implemented? *The General Education Oversight Committee will continue to work out the details of the courses that will make up the 30 credits, in conjunction with all interested faculty members. Proposed guidelines will be brought to the Faculty Senate for endorsement early in the 2012 calendar year. The GEOC subcommittees will continue to work on possible models that will bring more detail to the recently adopted two-tier structure, communication with faculty and other stakeholders, and tools for the assessment of the student learning outcomes. The subcommittees will also be communicating with faculty and other stake-holders regarding inclusion of current courses, as well as creation of new courses. Expected roll-out of the new Gen Ed program is Fall 2013.*

Is transferability really an issue? *Yes, students are not as free to explore different academic areas due to general education requirements being so different between units. Many people are not sure exactly what area they wish to major in when they first begin their college education. By having common general education requirements, students will be able to more easily use these credits if they change their major. However, the changes to general education requirements will not have an impact on the degree of difficulty related to transferring between majors when it comes to the major requirements.*

Is it easier to transfer into UMKC than to transfer within UMKC to another unit? *It can be. General education requirements are often so different from unit to unit, that students have to take all, or nearly all, new courses to meet the new unit's gen ed requirements. Transferring into UMKC can actually be easier due to granting of a 42 hour block for having an AA*

degree from a community college.

How will assessment be handled? Through the faculty or the Assessment office? What resources are available to faculty? *Assessment in General Education will focus on the eight learning outcomes and will consist of course-embedded assessments, standardized instruments, and student surveys/reflections. General education assessment will be coordinated by the University Assessment Committee and the Assistant Vice Provost for Assessment, but will be conducted primarily by faculty who are teaching General Education courses. The UMKC Assessment website provides resources on assessment for faculty (see <http://www.umkc.edu/provost/academic-assessment/default.asp>)*