

NJCC General Education

Guiding Principles for Affirming Gen Ed Course Status

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Introduction and Background

These guidelines result from discussions by the 2007-2008 New Jersey General Education Coordinating Committee. The task of the committee was to develop specific, objective criteria to evaluate community college General Education courses from the guidelines of the New Jersey General Education Foundation. Congruence with the “foundation” criteria is to be used as the dominant consideration in affirming, or not affirming, acceptance of submitted courses. The committee considered courses found to be compatible with the “foundation” criteria as being, in almost all cases, transferable to senior institutions. However, in the absence of a course by course guarantee of transferability, the priority in determining general education affirmation was based more on congruence with “foundation” criteria than with consideration of perceived transferability.

Some courses were affirmed as General Education in more than one category (e.g., Humanities and Diversity). Furthermore, some courses that were submitted for multiple General Education categories were only affirmed as General Education in a single category. In some cases, courses with similar or identical titles as approved General Education courses at some institutions were not approved for General Education at all institutions because the learning objectives were substantially different. In all categories, special studies/special topics courses were not affirmed as General Education as it is not possible to determine that all iterations of these courses meet the General Education guidelines for the category.

Individual Category Guidelines

1. **Communication** (Written and Oral Communication)
 - a. This category is limited to these courses:
 - Composition I
 - Composition II
 - Speech, Public Speaking, or Human Communication
 - b. No other courses fit the criteria for this category.
 - c. Technical Writing courses satisfy this general education category for specialized associate degree (e.g., AAS, ADN, and AFA) programs only.
 - d. Other mass communication, mass media, and communication courses do not satisfy this general education category.

2. **Mathematics** (Quantitative Knowledge and Skills)

All college-level math courses that build on basic or elementary algebra satisfy this general education category. It is not sufficient for the course to require basic

or elementary algebra as a prerequisite; the course must use, and demonstrably build upon, algebraic principles.

3. **Science** (Scientific Knowledge and Reasoning)
 - a. Any course whose primary focus is the scientific method and the exploration of scientific principles and theory satisfies this general education category.
 - b. Generally these courses are biological sciences and physical sciences (chemistry and physics) courses.
 - c. Sub-disciplines (e.g., astronomy, meteorology, forensics) may be acceptable as satisfying this general education category when they are physics- or chemistry-based.

4. **Technology** (Technological Competency)
 - a. **Technological Competency**
 - o Courses which include computer technology skills needed to access, process, and present information satisfy this general education category.
 - o Courses cannot be limited to one application or programming language.

5. **Social Science** (Society and Human Behavior)
 - a. Courses in anthropology, economics, geography, political science, psychology, and sociology satisfy this category.
 - b. The course concepts are viewed as gateway concepts into a discipline, as opposed to the notion of "introductory."
 - c. "Introductory" is not viewed as being limited to concepts that are simple in their content.
 - d. Given the "introductory" requirement, courses that require prerequisites, some 200-level courses, and courses that are "applied" are not considered as satisfying this general education category. (Applied courses are defined as those which are dependent on the theories and principles taught in the "introductory" courses and are not Gen Ed.)
 - e. Three of the fields that comprise Anthropology (Archaeology, Cultural Anthropology, and Physical Anthropology) are acceptable as satisfying this general education category provided they reference *culture* (as opposed to science).
 - f. Introductions to the four fields of Political Science are acceptable as satisfying this general education category: American Government, International Relations, Comparative Government, and Political Theory.
 - g. Psychology courses which satisfy this general education category include the following areas: psychology as a form of scientific inquiry, the biology of behavior, states of consciousness, learning, memory, cognition, motivation/emotion, life span, personality, and psychological disorders.
 - h. Sociology courses which satisfy this general education category include courses whose primary focus is on the major sociological perspectives and the sociological imagination.

- i. Discipline categories that do not satisfy this general education category include: Business, Communication, Criminal Justice, Education, Urban Studies, and Women's Studies.

6. Humanities (Humanistic Perspective)

The core criterion for all Humanities courses is that they meet the standard of "broad-based."

a. Appreciation of Art, Music, or Theater

In addition to "broad-based," a core criterion for courses in this subcategory is that the goal of appreciation is the primary purpose or focus.

○ *Appreciation of Art*

- Aesthetic appreciation and history of art fulfill this general education category. (Note: An art history course satisfies Humanities general education under this Fine Art, Music or Theater category but not under the History category.)
- Ethnic-based art is too specialized to satisfy this category of general education.
- Courses which are predominantly studio arts are too skills-based to satisfy this category of general education. Courses which satisfy this general education category may have a studio component. However, that studio component should support the goal of appreciation and should not be the primary purpose or focus of the course.
- Computer graphics courses do not fulfill this general education category.
- Aesthetic appreciation and history of photography courses satisfy this general education category.
- History of architecture does not satisfy this category.

○ *Appreciation and History of Music*

- Music appreciation and music history courses satisfy this general education category. (Note: A music history course satisfies Humanities Gen Ed under this Art, Music or Theater category but not under the History category.)
- Surveys of music genres as a reflection of a social or cultural era (e.g., Jazz, Pop) fulfill this general education category.
- Music theory does not fulfill this general education category.
- Performance courses which are predominantly skills-based do not satisfy this general education category.

○ *Appreciation of Theater*

- Appreciation of the Performing Arts, including Dance, and Cinema courses are considered part of this subcategory of Humanities.
- Appreciation and history courses fulfill this general education category. (Note: A theater history course satisfies Humanities Gen Ed under this Art, Music or Theater category but not under the History category.)

- Performing Arts courses where the students are predominantly the performers are skills-based and therefore do not satisfy this general education category.
- Specialized topics (e.g., African-American film, Latin American Lit in Film, Women in Film, Film and Pop Culture) do not satisfy this general education category.

b. Literature

- Survey courses that study a genre satisfy this general education category (e.g., drama, fiction poetry, the novel).
- Generally surveys of cultural or social groups do not satisfy this general education category.
- Literature courses like American Literature, African-American Literature, Women’s Literature, and Shakespeare, which can be vehicles for a broad-based examination of literature, satisfy this general education category.
- The study of large geographical areas or major time periods (continents, civilizations, etc.) satisfies this general education category.
- The study of non-survey courses (e.g., the Holocaust, AIDS, Vietnam, Puerto Rico, science fiction, and detective fiction) does not satisfy this general education category.
- Special studies or special topics courses do not satisfy this general education category. (It is assumed that the content of these courses changes. Therefore, it is not possible to affirm that every iteration of these courses satisfies this general education category.)

c. Foreign Language (World Language)

- All foreign language courses whose content is delivered in the target language satisfy this general education category.
- American Sign Language satisfies this general education category.
- Foreign language literature courses satisfy this general education category.
- Foreign language literature courses in translation do not satisfy this general education category.
- “Practical” Foreign Languages whose purpose appears to be to learn enough Berlitz-type “Foreign Language for travelers” do not fulfill this general education category.

d. History (as Humanities)

- Courses affirmed in this category are the same as those affirmed in the Historical Perspective category (see below).

e. Philosophy and/or Religious Studies

○ *Philosophy*

- Courses that treat broad areas of philosophy (e.g., Introduction to Philosophy, Ethics, Moral Choices, Critical

Thinking, and Logic) satisfy this general education category.

- Business and professional ethics courses are too specific to fulfill this general education category but may satisfy the ethics requirement.
- “Topics” courses are not sufficiently specific in their description to satisfy this general education category.
- *Religious Studies*
 - Courses that are broad in scope satisfy this general education category.
 - Courses based on a single text (even if it is the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, or Qur’an) are too narrowly focused and do not satisfy this general education category.

f. Interdisciplinary

- This category is represented by courses that fulfill requirements in multiple disciplines within the humanities and satisfy the Humanities general education category.

g. Communication (*further review of this subcategory is pending*)

7. History (Historical Perspective)

The core criterion for all Historical Perspective courses is that they meet the standard of “broad-based.”

- Survey courses of a major time period or continent (Asia, Europe, and Africa) satisfy this general education category.
- Courses that focus on a single ethnic, cultural, or social group are too specific to satisfy this general education category. (These courses may be accepted as satisfying the Global and Cultural Awareness category).
- History courses like African-American History and Women in History, which can be vehicles for a broad-based examination of historical perspectives, satisfy this general education category.
- Regional history is generally too specific and does not satisfy this general education category.
- Special studies or special topics courses do not satisfy this general education category.

8. Diversity (Global and Cultural Awareness)

- Courses in this category support the examination of multicultural societies or peoples and help engender a richer understanding of the diverse life experiences of societal subgroups.
- Diversity courses need not be “introductory” or “broad-based.” Thus, course levels, specific discipline identity, prerequisites, and the “introductory” or “broad-based” criteria are not considered.
- Societal groups are identified as – but are not limited to – race, class, gender, ethnicity, language, and religious orientation.
- The absence of other criteria limits decision making to case-by-case analysis.

- These courses may also be used to satisfy the requirements in the unassigned general education credit category for the AS and specialized associate degrees.

Integrated Goals Guidelines

These two goals, ethical reasoning and action and information literacy, will be integrated into select courses in each of the above general education categories.

Ethical Reasoning and Action

- These courses include the study of the ethical implications of issues and situations.
- Courses that integrate ethical reasoning and action must be included in each individual category. For example a philosophy course in ethics which integrates ethical reasoning and action may also satisfy the requirement in the Humanities - philosophy and/or religious studies category.

Information Literacy

- These courses include the requirement for students to address an information need by locating, evaluating and effectively using information. These courses should underline the research process through the inclusion of information-based assignments that require students to:
 - Identify and address an information need;
 - Access information effectively and efficiently;
 - Evaluate and think critically about information;
 - Use information effectively for a specific purpose; and
 - Use information ethically and legally.
- A specific breakdown of information literacy skills for the above learning outcomes can be located at: Information Literacy Progression Standards for NJ Colleges & Universities. Courses selected by individual institutions should focus on the Gateway/ Developing skills as identified in the Progression Standards.
- Courses that integrate information literacy must be included in each individual category.