



**October 21, 2022**

**Discussion Draft: Guidance: State University of New York General Education Update**

**Hold Harmless**

Campuses shall develop and implement policies and procedures that ease the transition to the new SUNY General Education (GE) framework from the perspective of the student experience. In this transition, students are to be 'held harmless' and to this end campuses are expected to adopt the following principles:

1. Campus decisions should have at the forefront a goal of creating conditions and outcomes that promote student success, provide for seamless transfer, and support timely degree completion.
2. Campuses must grant students the opportunity to pursue the GE requirements in place at the time of first enrollment where there has been no interruption in study beyond two academic years. Campuses may grant students the opportunity to pursue the GE requirements in place at the time of first enrollment for longer interruptions in study in accordance with their campus policies. Additionally, while the time of first enrollment is the first point of matriculation, campuses are permitted to consider non-matriculated enrollment when determining the time of first enrollment. Campuses may also establish a procedure to allow continuing students to choose the new SUNY GE when they are eligible for another.
3. For students who previously matriculated in a SUNY undergraduate degree program but had an interruption in study for two years or greater, campuses shall work with the students to determine which general education program is most appropriate to complete to prevent extending the time to the degree.
4. For students who were concurrently enrolled and successfully completed SUNY credit courses in the high school that were designated as meeting SUNY GE (either the sunsetting General Education Requirements or the new General Education framework), campuses shall grant SUNY GE credit for those courses regardless of the term of matriculation and/or the general education program being completed. Campuses may consider enrollment in a SUNY credit course in the high school as the point of first enrollment.
5. For transfer students, general education requirements identified as complete (fully or partially) on the General Education Transcript Addendum (GETA) shall be accepted and appropriately articulated at the receiving campus.
6. There shall be no conditions that require a student to repeat successfully completed SUNY GE courses, content, or credits that result in extended time-to-degree, unnecessary cost, and/or duplication of effort. In addition, course transfer may not be denied based on modality alone. All aspects of the 2013 Seamless Transfer policy (located here: <https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic->

[affairs/mtp/MTP13-3SeamlessTransfer6-14-13.pdf](#)) referring to SUNY GER (General Education Requirements) also apply to the new SUNY GE framework for A.A., A.S., and all baccalaureate degree programs. (See the “Seamless Transfer” section for implications for A.A.S. and A.O.S. degrees.)

7. Campuses shall provide appropriate exceptions, substitutions, and allowances to the benefit of a student while satisfying the goals and outcomes of the SUNY GE framework. For example, if a student successfully completed a SUNY GE course as a non-matriculated student, a campus may elect to apply the course toward the general education program being completed by the student.

### **SUNY GE Course Review, Approval, and Reporting**

1. Campuses shall be responsible for reviewing and approving SUNY General Education courses to meet the new SUNY GE Framework Knowledge and Skills areas and Core Competencies. SUNY System Administration will no longer review individual campus courses for approval; however, SUNY System Administration will provide guidance on an as-needed basis.
2. Campuses will submit locally approved SUNY GE courses via the SIRIS catalog function and SUNY System Administration will maintain the System-level database of approved SUNY GE courses, both current and historic.
3. Each campus shall have a faculty review process for adding, removing, or revising SUNY GE courses and updating its official list of approved SUNY GE courses. This is a faculty process that should meaningfully include the campus faculty governance body. For this, faculty have the responsibility to verify that all applicable student learning outcomes are met in a proposed course.
4. Each campus-approved SUNY GE course shall be aligned with the SUNY GE framework student learning outcomes for the respective category (or categories). Approved SUNY GE courses shall not be removed from the database of currently approved SUNY GE courses, unless the student learning outcomes have changed and the course no longer meets the category for which it was approved. In such cases, the course and its effective dates must remain on the comprehensive list of approved SUNY GE courses for the historical record so that students who had completed the course in the past will continue to receive credit for the category. The campus shall ensure its local database is consistent with the System-level database.

### **Use of the Exact Student Learning Outcomes Language from the SUNY GE Framework**

Courses approved for SUNY GE must meet the student learning outcomes, but it is not expected that all courses contain the SUNY student learning outcomes verbatim. For example, faculty have the discretion to adjust language to be more accessible to students (i.e., to rephrase in language that students use) and/or to make the language specific to the course (e.g., “...in one of the natural sciences” could be rewritten as “...in biology” for a course in the biological sciences). Additionally, campuses may add to the SUNY GE student learning outcomes if a course has a broader scope (e.g., a course approved for the Knowledge and Skills Area of Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice may include aspects of individual and group identity other than those required by SUNY GE). When there are language differences, campuses should document alignment with SUNY GE through a ‘crosswalk’ or similar mechanism.

## **Approval of SUNY GE Courses in Multiple Categories**

Campus faculty will determine whether a course satisfies student learning outcomes in multiple SUNY GE categories. A course approved in multiple SUNY GE categories must contain sufficient content and learning activities to address the learning outcomes for each category. There must be an assessment plan to evaluate student attainment of all learning outcomes for each of the multiple SUNY GE categories.

## **Requiring Completion of Multiple Courses to Meet a Single SUNY GE Knowledge and Skills Area**

1. It is allowable to require multiple courses to complete a single SUNY GE Knowledge and Skills area; however, this approach is not recommended, and campuses are urged to proceed cautiously. To facilitate student transfer, campuses are instead strongly encouraged to implement a one-to-one requirement-to-course relationship in which each SUNY GE Knowledge and Skills Area (with the exception of Communication) requires completion of a single course.
2. If a campus determines a single SUNY GE Knowledge and Skills Area must be met by the completion of multiple courses, the SUNY GE student learning outcomes associated with each required course must be identified on the General Education Transcript Addendum (GETA) and the amount of credit provided for each learning outcome must correspond to contact/credit hour requirements (see SUNY policy: [https://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc\\_id=168](https://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=168)).
3. For the purposes of applicability to the SUNY GE, campuses shall avoid distributing a single SUNY GE student learning outcome over multiple courses. The assessment plan for a SUNY GE Knowledge and Skills Area that requires completion of multiple courses must account for the assessment of all learning outcomes for the category in all the courses that are required to meet the category.
4. The SUNY GE Knowledge and Skills Area of Communication is the exception to this guidance due to longstanding precedent for campuses to allow for this requirement to be met either by one course that meets all student learning outcomes for this category or two courses for which one meets the Oral Communication student learning outcomes and the other meets the Written Communication student learning outcomes. If two courses are required for Communication and each course is designed foundationally as a communication course, full credits for each course may count toward the SUNY GE credit requirement (this is the only category for which this is the case).
5. For a student who transfers with partially fulfilled student learning outcomes for a SUNY GE Knowledge and Skills Area, the receiving campus may advise the student to complete coursework that satisfies the remaining learning outcome(s) listed on the General Education Transcript Addendum (GETA); however, the qualifying course(s) shall not extend the student's time-to-degree or require unnecessary cost and/or duplication of effort. Where this is not feasible at the receiving campus, the sending campus shall provide cross-registration options for the student that allow for completion of the remaining learning outcome(s), which shall not extend the student's time-to-degree or require unnecessary cost and/or duplication of effort.

## Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS)

1. Specific proportions of LAS are required in state regulation for various degree types. These requirements help to ensure breadth of study and all programs must meet them to be registered with the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Campuses should strive to have all approved SUNY GE courses meet the NYSED LAS definition (included here: <http://www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/department-expectations-curriculum>). To do so for performance courses in the Arts, for example, campuses may need to highlight the ways in which courses such as studio art, creative writing, and musical recitation, to name a few, foster a broad theoretical or historical understanding of the artistic expression that may qualify the course as liberal arts. This foundation is often not explicitly written in course documents, but can be included in the syllabus within the course description, learning outcomes, etc.
2. If a campus is unable to identify courses for a SUNY GE category that meet the NYSED definition of LAS, courses may be approved as SUNY GE even if not also LAS. For some programs, SUNY GE courses may need to be major area courses that do not meet the NYSED definition of LAS. In other programs, there may be courses in disciplines which do not at first glance appear to be LAS disciplines, but for which the content may be essentially LAS (e.g., Business Ethics). Still other programs (such as A.O.S. degree programs) may need to incorporate SUNY GE into courses that do not meet the LAS definition. In all cases, the campus must still ensure that minimum LAS requirements are satisfied for the respective award type. The campus should confer with its assigned SUNY program reviewer/liaison (<https://system.suny.edu/academic-affairs/acaproplan/app/find-your-campus-reviewer/>), as needed.

## Seamless Transfer

1. All aspects of the 2013 Seamless Transfer policy (located here: <https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/mtp/MTP13-3SeamlessTransfer6-14-13.pdf>) referring to SUNY GER (General Education Requirements) also apply to the new SUNY GE framework for A.A., A.S., and all baccalaureate programs.
2. Freestanding General Education courses in all programs are guaranteed to transfer as per SUNY policy. Courses in which General Education learning outcomes are embedded may transfer, but the transfer of these courses is not guaranteed. (See definition of freestanding and embedded below). Under no circumstances should a course be denied transfer solely due to the type of program in which it occurs.
  - a. Freestanding general education courses are courses where the SUNY GE learning outcomes are foundational to the course (these are often, but not exclusively, Liberal Arts and Sciences courses).
  - b. Embedded general education courses are typically applied courses where SUNY GE learning outcomes have been added to address a SUNY GE requirement, but where these SUNY GE learning outcomes are not foundational to the course. Examples might include, but are not limited to, Nursing courses that have incorporated DEISJ learning outcomes, or HVAC courses that have incorporated Communication learning outcomes.
3. Local general education requirements beyond the SUNY GE shall not require a transfer student to exceed the number of credits to graduation required of native students in the same program

- (MTP Vol.13, No. 3; I.A.vi.). There shall be no conditions that require a student to repeat successfully completed SUNY General Education Course, content, or credits that would result in extended time-to-degree, unnecessary cost, and/or duplication of effort.
4. If a SUNY sending institution certifies that a student has completed SUNY GE in its entirety, then the receiving institution must accept that requirement as being met (MTP Vol.13, No. 3; I.A.vii.).
  5. If a SUNY sending institution certifies that a student has completed a SUNY GE knowledge and skills area, then the receiving institution must accept that requirement as being met. If the transfer student has completed SUNY GE areas that are different from the SUNY GE areas required by the receiving institution, the receiving institution may require the transfer student to fulfill the additional locally required general education areas if it does not require the transfer student to exceed the number of credits to graduation that are required of students who began their college education at the same institution (MTP Vol.13, No. 3; I.A.viii.). There shall be no conditions that require a student to repeat successfully completed SUNY General Education Courses or credits that result in extended time-to-degree, unnecessary cost, and/or duplication of effort.
  6. Each SUNY campus shall accept credit from transfer students for successfully completing SUNY GE framework courses (MTP Vol.13, No. 3; III.B.).
  7. A passing grade counts as successful completion for the SUNY GE area at any campus; transfer of credit is guaranteed if a course is successfully completed with a grade of C or above. Each campus has discretion about whether a particular course grade satisfies local graduation requirements outside SUNY GE, provided that the campus treats native and transfer students the same (MTP Vol.13, No. 3; III.B.i.) Campuses can choose to accept a grade lower than C. In cases where the student has not achieved a grade of C or better, guaranteeing transfer, but has completed the course with a passing grade of less than a C, the category must be considered to be met even if the course itself does not transfer.
  8. Successfully completed Pass/Fail courses may be accepted at the discretion of the campus, but transfer is not guaranteed (MTP Vol.13, No. 3; III.B.ii.).<sup>1</sup>
  9. A sending campus shall provide a transcript, including the General Education Transcript Addendum (GETA) for each transferring student, and a receiving campus shall accept the transcript and GETA as certification of the completion (in full or part) of SUNY GE (MTP Vol. 10, No.1; II.D.iv.). The GETA shall be revised to allow for documentation of completion of both the SUNY GER and the SUNY GE frameworks and shall provide for documentation of the completion of the core competencies as well. In some cases, there may also be a need to document the achievement of specific learning outcomes. (See multiple courses above).
  10. Campuses are reminded that general education changes may necessitate technical changes to provide for tracking, delivering, and transcription of SUNY GE including any necessary revisions to student information systems, Degree Audit systems, Degree Works, Transfer Finder, and catalogs. It is therefore essential to be engaging with registrars, IT, and IR throughout the planning for this transition to ensure timely and accurate revisions.
  11. To address any concerns about course approvability and the transfer of credit, campuses are encouraged to work together to seek resolution. If necessary, campuses or students may submit an appeal to the SUNY's Provost's Office for intervention. Consistent with prior SUNY policy, decisions regarding the transfer of SUNY GE courses can be appealed at the campus and SUNY System level.

## **Assessment of the General Education Program**

Each campus with one or more general education program(s) shall develop and implement a plan for the organized and systematic assessment of its general education program(s) that meets or exceeds the standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The plan shall indicate where in the curricula the student learning outcomes for the SUNY GE Knowledge and Skills Areas and Core Competencies are addressed and assessed (typically through curriculum mapping), and how the results are used to improve teaching and learning (MTP Vol. 10, No. 2, II. D). Conclusions resulting from assessment of the program are expected to be drawn at the institutional level. Results should then be disaggregated to determine what improvements may be needed. Assessment of the general education program shall occur frequently enough to provide for timely interventions for the improvement of teaching and learning. Campuses shall subsequently determine the effectiveness of any interventions and any additional steps needed to effect improvement.

## **Program Reregistration due to Changes Resulting from Implementation of the SUNY GE Framework**

For non-licensure programs, changes in general education will require reregistration only if such changes contribute to exceeding cumulative changes since the most recent registration of one-third or more of the minimum credits required for the award (e.g., 20 credits for associate degree programs, 40 credits for baccalaureate degree programs). Therefore, changes in general education, in and of themselves, are not likely to prompt the need to reregister non-licensure programs. If a campus anticipates a significant number of revisions to non-licensure programs, please consult with your SUNY academic program reviewer (<https://system.suny.edu/academic-affairs/acaproplan/app/find-your-campus-reviewer/>), so that we can work with the campus and NYSED to determine the best way to proceed. For licensure-qualifying programs, please consult with your SUNY academic program reviewer if your campus anticipates making any changes to the curriculum so they can work with your campus and NYSED to determine the best way to proceed, including whether an exception can be granted because the changes do not impact the required content for the profession.

## **Programmatic Waivers**

Campuses may seek a waiver of a SUNY GE Knowledge and Skills Area and/or maximum credits for a degree for a specific academic program in cases where the program's curriculum is governed by external standards such as specialized accreditation. Note: The four specifically required Knowledge and Skills Areas will not be approved for waiver. Waiver requests must be submitted through the campus Provost to the SUNY Office of the Provost using the form located at:

[https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/program-planning/forms/9\\_Seamless-Transfer-Waiver-Request-PILOT-2014-11-17.docx](https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/program-planning/forms/9_Seamless-Transfer-Waiver-Request-PILOT-2014-11-17.docx)

## **Core Competencies (Critical Thinking and Reasoning; Information Literacy)**

1. Credits for a course approved to meet a Core Competency do not count toward the SUNY GE credit requirement.
2. Student achievement of Core Competencies must be assessed and documented on the General Education Transcript Addendum (GETA) with the first 60 credits of a degree program.
3. In order for meaningful assessments of the Core Competencies to be conducted, curriculum maps should be developed that show in which courses the learning outcomes are delivered



and assessed. The final assessment within the first 60 credits should be sufficient for recording achievement of the competencies on the GETA.

4. For institutions that assess their Core Competencies as a summative assessment at the end of a baccalaureate degree, a formative assessment at or prior to the program midpoint should be conducted to be able to determine that the competency has been met within the first 60 credits.

## **Clarifications in Specific Knowledge and Skills Areas**

### **Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice**

This category, like all categories, is the responsibility of faculty. As is the case for all courses, faculty teaching courses approved for this category must have demonstrable expertise in the disciplinary area of the course such that they have the ability to teach and assess the student learning outcomes of the course. The Faculty Council of Community Colleges (FCCC), University Faculty Senate (UFS), and SUNY Consortium on Assessment (SCOA) have worked together to develop faculty-to-faculty guidance on course approval, as well as an assessment rubric. These may help faculty in determining the appropriateness of any proposed DEISJ courses. Campuses are encouraged to make use of the guidance as deemed locally appropriate.

Guidance on Approving Courses for the DEISJ Requirement:

[https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/general-education/suny-ge/FCCC\\_UFS\\_Guidance-on-DEISJ-courses.pdf](https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/general-education/suny-ge/FCCC_UFS_Guidance-on-DEISJ-courses.pdf)

DEISJ Rubric: [https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/general-education/suny-ge/FCCC\\_UFS\\_GER-DIVERSITY-ASSESSMENT-RUBRIC-Template\\_Framing-Language-Enumeration-and-Revision.pdf](https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/general-education/suny-ge/FCCC_UFS_GER-DIVERSITY-ASSESSMENT-RUBRIC-Template_Framing-Language-Enumeration-and-Revision.pdf)

### **Natural Science (and Scientific Reasoning)**

The required Knowledge and Skills Area of Natural Science (and Scientific Reasoning) is included in SUNY GE to be consistent with the Middle States general education requirement for Scientific Reasoning. During the policy development process, overwhelming feedback from SUNY campuses indicated that many courses in the social sciences (and possibly other liberal arts and sciences disciplines) include scientific reasoning in their learning outcomes. For this reason, campuses have the latitude to approve a social science course or courses in other disciplines for this category, if the learning outcomes for the course include demonstrating scientific reasoning applied to the respective disciplinary area(s), as described in the student learning outcomes.

### **World History and Global Awareness**

The terms “well-being” and “sustainability” are not centrally defined. Instead, campuses are to interpret these terms within the context of the course(s) being considered for approvability for this category. Sustainability, for example, is meant to be interpreted broadly as in the sustainability of a culture, civilization, etc. (e.g., see the UN Sustainable Development Goals, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>, which include access to education, economic vitality, etc.). Although the environment may quickly come to mind when thinking about sustainability, it is quite possible for courses across a variety of disciplines to have a focus on sustainability (e.g., an investment and

finance course might be designed to explore the impact of the World Bank on sustaining economies and reducing poverty).

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<sup>1</sup> Note exception: See memorandum from Tod A. Laursen, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor, April 7, 2020, “Due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding SUNY’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, when evaluating general education course credit earned during the Spring 2020 term by incoming transfer students, transfer of credit is guaranteed at all SUNY campuses if a SUNY general education course is successfully completed with any passing grade, including a ‘P’ in a Pass/Fail grading system.” This exception applies only to general education course credit earned during the Spring 2020 term and thus does not impact the revised SUNY General Education requirements described in this guidance.

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