

PROPOSAL TO REVISE GENERAL EDUCATION AT SUNY NEW PALTZ TO ALIGN WITH THE SUNY GENERAL EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

Submitted to Faculty Senate for consideration
February, 2022

This proposal presents the necessary modifications to bring SUNY New Paltz's General Education Program (GE4) into alignment with the new [SUNY General Education Framework](#) (Framework) that was approved by the SUNY Board of Trustees on November 9, 2021. Given the short time frame for implementation, the fact that SUNY New Paltz recently revised its GE program, and that program already aligns with the Framework in many ways, this proposal suggests minimum modifications to GE4. The new Framework designates Diversity: Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice a SUNY-wide GE requirement. The Framework also decenters - rather than removes - Western Civilization in the curriculum. Instead of dividing 'Western Civilization' from 'Other World Civilizations,' the Framework unifies these categories as World History and Global Awareness. Further, student learning outcomes have been updated across the knowledge and skills areas and competencies. This gives us an opportunity to continue our efforts to create a more inclusive core curriculum.

Only the minimum modifications are being proposed at this time because the SUNY Board of Trustees has required that the Framework be instituted for students matriculating in Fall 2023. This gives us one and a half years to both develop and implement a program that aligns with the Framework. This tight timeline is further complicated by the fact that faculty are already exhausted from learning new teaching modalities, developing new technology skills, revising their classes to be remote or hybrid, supporting students who are struggling with learning and mental health due to the COVID-19 crisis, and dealing with their own personal crises and grief caused by the pandemic. As a point of comparison, our most recent General Education revision process was both ambitious and contentious, taking seven years to develop and three years to implement.

GE4 is a product of extensive research and deliberation. The "[Proposal for Restructuring the SUNY New Paltz General Education Program and University Curriculum](#)," submitted by the GE Board in December 2015, took the following into consideration: a campus-wide survey, ongoing informal conversations, ongoing meetings with representatives of different campus groups, earlier faculty votes on GE and university requirements, and the research of the liberal education committees. When the proposal moved to the Curriculum Committee that body conducted focus groups and a faculty survey, and reviewed chairs' reports and individual comments. This information was considered in their development of the "[Proposal to Revise General Education at New Paltz](#)" submitted in April 2016. Because this process was so extensive and feedback was sought at multiple levels of development we feel confident maintaining the core of GE4 and only making the changes necessary to bring the program into compliance with the Framework.

There were several promising proposals brought forward in the past by the Liberal Education Committees and the GE Board that were not pursued. Further, when the Framework was originally proposed, faculty had compelling ideas for additional requirements and curricular innovations. Moving forward with minimal changes does not preclude these proposals from

being considered in the future. Unfortunately, the tight SUNY deadline and conditions created by the COVID 19 pandemic make this a difficult time to consider a more ambitious revision of the General Education Program.

A. SUNY GE FRAMEWORK REQUIREMENTS

The SUNY GE framework includes twelve categories of knowledge, skills and competencies—ten knowledge and skills areas expose students to different ways of knowing so that they can make reasoned judgements outside as well as inside their academic field, and enable them to develop diverse perspectives and global understanding; and two core competencies that extend beyond discipline-specific knowledge and skills. Among the specific knowledge and skills categories is a new requirement, Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice. This requirement aligns with the SUNY Board of Trustees’ Policy on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (adopted September 10, 2015) as well as SUNY’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Phase I Action Plan (2021), which recommends including a diversity category in the general education requirements. In addition, explicitly delineated skills and competencies in quantitative reasoning, scientific reasoning, oral and written communication, critical thinking and reasoning, and information literacy help to ensure SUNY graduates have the 21st-century knowledge, skills, and competencies they need, while also satisfying institutional accreditation expectations. Finally, the framework provides flexibility for campuses to develop innovative and robust local general education programs for their respective undergraduate degrees.

1. Knowledge and Skills Areas

(a minimum of 7 of 10 categories of knowledge and skills are required)

The following four are required

Communication – written and oral

Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

Mathematics (and quantitative reasoning)

Natural Sciences (and scientific reasoning)

In addition, a minimum of three of the following six are required

Humanities

Social Sciences

The Arts

US History and Civic Engagement

World History and Global Awareness

World Languages

2. Core Competencies – both required

Critical Thinking and Reasoning

Information Literacy

B. PROPOSED GE4 MODIFICATIONS TO ALIGN WITH THE FRAMEWORK

1. Required Knowledge and Skills Areas

As stated above, the SUNY-wide GE Framework requires a minimum of 7 of 10 categories of knowledge and skills areas. We propose requiring all 10 categories for the GE program at SUNY New Paltz, which will allow continuity with GE4.

2. Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

We propose moving the Diversity degree requirement back into the General Education Program, utilizing the Framework title of Diversity: Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice and accompanying SLOs. The Diversity graduation requirement was passed by the faculty in December 2014. The motion read “Consistent with our SUNY New Paltz mission statement and our history, all students are required to complete at least one course that examines the perspective of traditionally underrepresented groups within the United States as a graduation requirement.” Previously, New Paltz had a local GE Diversity requirement. The Diversity Board developed diversity SLOs and has shepherded Diversity courses through the approval process.

We agree with the Diversity Board that whether a university requirement or part of GE, a single course requirement cannot possibly satisfy our curriculum’s role in satisfying the SUNY New Paltz mission, which opens by stating our dedication “to the construction of a vibrant intellectual/creative public forum which reflects and celebrates the diversity of our society.” While not a question directly under the purview of the GE Board, we join the Diversity Board in calling for continued campus-wide discussion of and resources directed at revising and reimagining our curriculum and pedagogy more broadly, centering diversity, equity, and inclusion.

3. World History and Global Awareness

The Framework unifies the existing categories of Western Civilization (WEST) and Other World Civilizations (WORLD) into the new category of World History and Global Awareness (WHGA). The SLOs for WHGA are not the same as the SLOs for WEST and WORLD. Courses that are currently in the WEST or WORLD categories may need to be modified or other knowledge and skills areas could be considered.

4. Student Learning Outcomes

Academic programs will need to review, and possibly revise, General Education courses to meet the new Framework SLOs. The amount of change needed varies depending on the knowledge and skills area. The SLOs in the following areas have remained unchanged or have been reduced: Mathematics, Natural Sciences (and Scientific Reasoning), Social Sciences, The Arts, and World Languages. Further, the SLOs for the competencies Critical Thinking and Reasoning and Information Literacy (currently Information Management) have been revised. Courses designated on departmental and

programmatic curricular maps as addressing the current SLOs for these competencies will also need to be reviewed for alignment with the new SLOs and possibly updated.

C. GE BOARD REPRESENTATION

The following changes will need to be made to the composition of the GE Board membership: addition of representatives for the knowledge and skills areas of Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice, and World History and Global Awareness and the removal of representatives for Western Civilization and World Civilizations.

D. PROPOSED ASSESSMENT PLAN CHANGES

We propose increasing the timeframe for the assessment cycles and eliminating one assessment category in an effort to reduce assessment load while increasing assessment integrity. These changes are proposed to begin AY 2022/2023.

1. Competencies Direct Assessments

Competencies will be assessed on a four-year cycle rather than a three-year cycle. This will provide increased opportunities for programs to conduct assessments of their own choosing and/or assessments that align with accreditation requirements.

2022/2023 - Programmatic Choice

2023/2024 - Information Literacy

2024/2025 - Programmatic Choice

2025/2026 - Critical Thinking and Reasoning

2. Knowledge and Skills Areas Reflective Direct Assessments in Capstone Classes

Knowledge and skills (content) area assessments will be conducted in capstone/capstone equivalent classes on a four-year cycle rather than a three-year cycle. Spreading out the assessment of ten knowledge and skills areas over four years will allow us to incorporate more robust closing the loop activities. This will provide more time for analysis of and discussions about results, suggestions for changes that would lead to enhanced student learning, and implementation of those changes. We will set aside 2022/2023 for closing the loop activities from the first three-year cycle of knowledge and skills area assessment that was initiated in 2019/2020.

- 2022/2023 – **Closing the Loop** - All categories from first assessment cycle 2019-2021
- 2023/2024 - **Assessment** - Natural Sciences (and Scientific Reasoning), Social Sciences
- 2024/2025 - **Assessment** - Humanities, U.S. History and Civic Engagement,
Communication – Oral
Closing the Loop - Natural Sciences (and Scientific Reasoning), Social Sciences
- 2025/2026 - **Assessment** - World History and Global Awareness, The Arts, World Languages
Closing the Loop - Humanities, U.S. History and Civic Engagement, Communication – Oral
- 2026/2027 – **Assessment** - Communication – Written, Mathematics (and Quantitative Reasoning), Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice
Closing the Loop - World History and Global Awareness, The Arts, World Languages
- 2027/2028 - **Assessment** - Natural Sciences (and Scientific Reasoning), Social Sciences
Closing the Loop - Communication – Written, Mathematics (and Quantitative Reasoning), Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

3. Faculty Survey Questions

Currently, faculty teaching GE courses in categories being assessed complete a survey at the end of the spring semester. This survey will be discontinued. Instead, questions from the survey will be used as points of discussion for faculty teaching in GE knowledge and skills areas during the “closing the assessment loop” cycles.

ADDENDUM

The GE Board hosted two open forums (February 2nd and 10th) for faculty to discuss the draft of the GE Proposal and solicited feedback through a survey. Not all feedback and suggestions were incorporated into the GE proposal for two reasons:

1. New Paltz faculty recently made major revisions to the GE curriculum and GE assessment through a multi-year process involving many conversations and collaboration across disciplines and programs. We do not want to undo any of that important work.
2. Our campus needs a new GE plan before any subsequent steps can be taken, including submitting course proposals, revising course offerings, assembling a schedule for the Fall 2023 – Spring 2024 academic year, coding classes, and updating admissions materials for prospective students. Since our deadline for having our revised GE program running is Fall 2023, this puts us on a short timeline that leaves little room to introduce major changes.

The purpose of this addendum is to address feedback that could not be incorporated and include proposals that fall outside the purview of the proposal. Faculty can decide to revisit our GE Program and plan more involved curriculum and assessment changes in the future.

It was proposed that our campus have a transitional period between GE4 and the newly proposed GE. A transitional GE program is not possible because the SLOs are significantly different in multiple categories and some knowledge and skills areas have been retitled. However, our university will have three GE programs (GE3, GE4, and the revised GE4) in place simultaneously to fulfill students' requirements for graduation. The process is transitional as we phase some GE categories out and offer more classes in new GE categories. Guidance for this transitional process will be overseen by the Implementation Task Force and will be coordinated across multiple offices.

It was proposed that the draft proposal revise the assessment of GE competencies to provide more leeway for programs to assess their program-specific student learning outcomes. This GE proposal responds to the concern with assessment timing and labor by adjusting the cycle of categories and competencies to allow more space for programmatic assessment and closing the loop. More dramatic changes to GE assessment require more time, conversation, and collaboration among faculty than the timeline for implementing the new SUNY Framework allows.