UNIVERSITY WIDE GENERAL EDUCATION STRUCTURE

Expected Outcomes for Course Offerings

These guidelines are intended to provide measurable student outcomes and broad course goals for each of the main components of the general education structure.

CONTENTS

All Tier One and Tier Two courses should be rigorous treatments of fundamental knowledge and methods of inquiry

- All Tier One and Tier Two courses should emphasize critical and evaluative thinking
- Insofar as possible, all Tier One and Tier Two courses should integrate into the course structure new technologies, including computer and multimedia applications
- Writing or other forms of composition must be integral parts of every Tier One and Tier Two course and should include multiple formats
- All Tier One courses must accommodate honors students; all segments of Tier Two must allot a proportion of seats to honors students consistent with their representation in the student population.

TIER ONE: INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES

After taking Tier One courses in Individuals and Societies students will be able to:

- understand more clearly issues of self-identity, social difference and social status, and the effects of major institutions on individual experiences
- demonstrate knowledge of the formal and informal structures and processes that make social systems, governments, and economies work
- have an informed opinion about socio-cultural problems and issues, which can be expressed orally or in writing, and based on knowledge about social, cultural, political, economic, philosophical, and religious theory
- demonstrate a well developed critical faculty for distinguishing among the various theoretical and ideological interpretations of world events as they are presented in the media

Tier One courses in Individuals and Societies will:

- emphasize fundamental issues and concepts pertinent to the broad exploration of questions about human beings and their societies
- foster independent, creative, and interactive learning
- provide students with opportunities to discuss course topics and material
- inspire students to think about themselves, others, and social organizations in new insightful ways
- instill in students a love of learning, excite them about the university experience, and leave them with valuable skills and knowledge applicable to their lives
• focus on BOTH individuals AND societies, or on either

Representative areas of study include, but are not limited to: basic human thought processes (e.g. conceptual systems, symbolic representation of the world, knowledge acquisition, judgment and decisionmaking, problem-solving); personal identity; group identity; family and kinship structure; religious, political, economic, and legal institutions; individual freedom and social control; ethical and moral principles; and ideas of social justice. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, and it is not expected that any single course will necessarily span all the areas above.

Tier One courses in Individuals and Societies do not confirm to these guidelines if:

• they do not avoid narrow parochialism
• they focus primarily on material of a current topical nature

TIER ONE: TRADITIONS AND CULTURES

After taking Tier One courses in Traditions and Cultures students will be able to:

• identify references and allusions to the periods, ideas, people, artifacts, and events generally felt to have been important in the past
• identify and define their own world view, compare and contrast their world view with other world views, and through written and oral communication present and defend their world view
• appreciate the art, history, politics, and philosophies of cultures other than their own, including non-western cultures
• analyze how perceptions, values, beliefs, and customs influence individual and societal behavior and to use these analyses before judging

Tier One courses in Traditions and Cultures will:

• study historical development and fundamental concepts in European or other world cultures
• provide an awareness that we, as historical beings, are shaped by the thoughts and actions of our predecessors and that we will influence the lives of those who follow us
• examine cultures as distinct heritages of ideas, values, and artistic expressions and view them
• as having undergone continual adaptation due to social changes.
• have a broad sweep both in terms of chronology (no less than an historical epoch) and in terms of geography (no less than a subcontinent)
• engage in a rigorous exploration of fundamental knowledge that emphasizes interdisciplinary and crosscultural analysis
• emphasize the assessment, evaluation, and critique of culture.
• require significant essay assignments

Tier One courses in Traditions and Cultures do not confirm to these guidelines if:
• they do not use the study of a specific culture as an exemplar of how traditions and cultures develop and change

TIER ONE: NATURAL SCIENCES

After taking Tier One courses in Natural Sciences students will be able to:

• understand the nature and application of physical and/or biological science
• apply ideas and processes beyond the classroom
• recognize the complexity of many scientific issues
• design experiments, generating and analyzing actual data, using abstract reasoning to interpret these, formulating and testing hypotheses with scientific rigor
• speak and write about scientific knowledge
• appreciate the relative scale of objects, rates of change, linear and nonlinear growth
• present data in tables, graphs and charts as well as performing appropriate mathematical calculations and data analysis
• read and understand scientific literature from popular sources such as magazines and newspapers

Tier One courses in Physical Sciences will:

• demonstrate the importance of physical and chemical processes and their application to events in the everyday world
• cover the following major concepts:
  o Newton's laws governing force and motion
  o laws of thermodynamics governing energy and entropy
  o the role of electromagnetism in nature
  o the atomic structure of matter
• be interdisciplinary and cut across departments and disciplines and integrate them so that the commonality of the scientific approach can be exemplified. To insure this interdisciplinary perspective every offering must include course content that integrates two or more disciplinary or cross-disciplinary applications such as:
  o Astronomy/Planetary Sciences: Formation and development of the Universe; cosmology, stellar evolution and planetary astronomy
  o Geosciences: Formation, development of the earth; geophysical/geochemical processes of continents and oceans
  o Engineering/Technological Sciences: The interplay between science and technology; applied science and everyday life
  o Atmospheric sciences: Formation and development of the atmosphere; physical and chemical processes of the atmosphere, weather and climate
  o Environmental Sciences: The interaction and interconnections between physical, chemical, and biological processes as they affect, and are affected by, human beings living in their environment

Tier One courses in Biological Sciences will:
demonstrate the importance of a study of biology and their application to events in the everyday world.
be rigorous and emphasize the integrative nature of science, including crossdiscipline contributions, and include exposure to scientific thinking and procedures applicable throughout the sciences
encourage students to think critically about the world around them, the processes leading to the evolution of diverse life forms, the interdependence of living systems, the importance of understanding and preserving the life around us, and the benefits of playing an active role in their own health and wellbeing
cover the following major concepts:
  o Evolution and diversity of life
  o Cells
  o Structure and function at the multi-cellular level
  o Genetics and Development
  o Health and Disease
  o Interaction and interdependence between organisms

A course would not conform to these guidelines if:
  it does not include all major concept areas specified for either the physical or biological sciences

TIER TWO

Tier Two courses should be advanced beyond Tier One courses in conceptual level, if not always in specific content. Such courses may provide exposure to the primary aspects of a discipline, but they are not to be constructed as introductions to a major. The prerequisites for Tier Two course are Tier One courses (or their transfer equivalents) in the same subject areas; Tier Two Humanities courses require the completion of Tier One - Traditions and Cultures requirement, and Natural Science and Individuals and Societies courses at the Tier Two level require the completion of the corresponding Tier One segment. Only the Tier Two Arts segment is not specifically sequenced after any Tier One courses. However, Tier Two courses in all four segments may, in some cases, list as prerequisites certain basic requirements in mathematics and/or composition that may be satisfied through earlier coursework or its equivalent. Tier Two - Natural Science courses may include a laboratory component.

Like those in Tier One, Tier Two courses should include significant composition in multiple formats. Tier Two courses (exams, in-class, group work, ungraded exercises, journal-writing, laboratory reports and term papers are some possibilities). Tier Two courses should also be constructed so that a number of faculty members can teach them.

TIER TWO: ARTS

After taking Tier Two courses in the Arts students will be able to:
• identify and analyze basic formal elements, principles and compositional structures in the fine arts of cinema, dance, music, theater, and the visual arts
• identify and analyze the impact of cultural and historical factors on the creation and reception of artistic works
• evaluate the significance of artistic works both metaphorically and in larger cultural contexts
• in writing and speaking use appropriate vocabulary to describe and analyze artistic works
• identify and analyze similarities, differences, and interrelationships among the arts

Tier Two courses in the Arts will:

• emphasize oral, visual, musical, spatial or kinesthetic forms of expression
• include components which either emphasize student creativity, expression and production or require students to identify and analyze the impact of cultural and historical factors on the creation and reception of artistic works
• develop students' critical thinking and interpretive abilities

TIER TWO: HUMANITIES

After taking Tier Two courses in Humanities students will be able:

• identify and analyze the impact of cultural and historical factors on the creation and reception of artistic and literary works
• relate arguments and ideas from literature and historical documents to the circumstances under which they were written; read primary documents and be able to place them in their historical context; identify disparate ideas from the evidence of these documents
• describe how the development of philosophical and religious thought has influenced human civilization
• use appropriate vocabulary for written and oral descriptions and analyses of literary works

Tier Two courses in the Humanities will:

• explore aspects of human culture such as religion, history, philosophy, literature and languages in an interdisplinary fashion rather than as discrete phenomena
• allow students to develop critical thinking and interpretive approaches to culture

TIER TWO: NATURAL SCIENCE

After taking Tier Two courses in Natural Science students will be able:

• read and understand scientific literature from journals and other scholarly works

Tier Two courses in the Natural Science will:
• build on concepts developed in Tier One Natural Science courses. Tier Two courses may be discipline based (e.g. chemistry or molecular and cellular biology) or integrate physical and biological sciences
• will not necessarily advance all concepts from Tier One physical and biological sciences but those concepts which are advanced must be made clear
• will include a laboratory component where appropriate
• require more than the memorization and comprehension of factual information and emphasize the application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation of scientific concepts
• designed for non-science majors

TIER TWO: INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES

After taking Tier Two courses in Individuals and Societies students will be able to:

• study human behavior and the cognitive models and societal constructs that humans create
• where applicable, have a disciplinary focus (e.g., anthropology, linguistics and economics) so long as they are clearly designed to address the interests of students who may take only a single course within the discipline
• focus on self-contained topics that develop one or more of the formats to which students were exposed at the Tier One level.

THE INTEGRATION OF WRITING

Writing in General Education courses should place students in an active relationship to the body of facts, ideas, and theories presented in the course and help students develop a critical appreciation of the ways in which knowledge is acquired and applied. Most important is that the writing assignments are relevant to the discipline and appropriate to the course level.

The following are guidelines for the integration of writing:

• Writing should be integrated into the requirements of the general education course through any number of means including, written papers, reports, quizzes, examinations, journals, ungraded writing assignments and during class and group work. Examinations alone are not deemed sufficient even though they may include essay questions.
• The written discourse should emphasize critical inquiry including gathering, interpretation, and evaluation of information.
• Written work should be evaluated for form, organization, grammar, punctuation, and style.
• At least one writing assignment must involve revision of the writing assignment after the instructor has provided feedback on a first draft.
• At least one writing assignment must be an out-of-class or lab assignment and must be of 500 words in length.
• The writing assignments may vary in number but should be a minimum of 10 pages or 2500 words. Some suggestions for determining number of typewritten pages or words:
  o one assignment: 10 typewritten pages or 2500 words
o two assignments: 5 typewritten pages or 1250 words
o 10 lab reports: 1 typewritten page or 250 words
o or any combination of assignments equaling the minimum

ACCOMODATING THE HONORS STUDENT

The Honors Center is very interested in encouraging more Honors course options given that one in four incoming students register as Honors students. Courses that meet requirements in students' academic plans are particularly needed. The Center views Honors courses as essential to the program which is built upon offering strong academic offerings to talented students. One of the Center's goals is to increase the number of students taking Honors courses thus enabling them to receive Honors on their first two years of academic work (First-level honors) and to graduate with Honors.

Honors courses in general education are particularly needed because Honors students come from all colleges and majors. By the time students get into their advanced course work, there may not be sufficient numbers of Honors students to support Honors sections.

The following are highlights from a 1996 assessment of Honors Students (n=954):

- Fifty-five percent of the Honors students indicated that small, independent Honors sections were their preferred Honors course format for general education/core courses; 35% preferred a large general lecture with an Honors discussion section and 8% preferred a regular course with an extra project for Honors credit.
- Eighty-two percent rated Honors courses that meet general education courses as a high priority (second only to courses in the major 91%)
- Honors students cited 17 as the optimum course size
- 360 students reported that they had taken Honors courses in general education (compared to 275 in their major). They rated these courses as 3.25 on a 4 point scale (with 4 being "excellent"). Courses in the major were rated as 3.19