

**Policy 1993-01-A: *General Education at State System of Higher Education
Universities***

Adopted: January 21, 1993

Amended: October 6, 2016

A. Purposes

1. To reaffirm the significance and value of General Education and to strengthen its assessment through measurable outcomes;
2. To align the Board of Governors policy with regional accreditation standards related to General Education and assessment of student learning outcomes.

B. Introduction

General Education is aligned with the liberal education approach to learning and it is the part of a university undergraduate curriculum that is shared by all students. It ensures that students acquire breadth of knowledge and provides a basis for developing essential learning outcomes. Learning across traditions and disciplines fosters integration of knowledge and develops skills in diversity, civic and cultural awareness, communication, problem solving, and critical analysis. Within General Education, student learning outcomes consist less in mastery of disciplinary content than in the acquisition of the skills, values, awareness, understanding, perspective and appreciation that are the foundation for informed citizenship in a democratic society, innovation, and career readiness. General Education is also a foundational component of employability skills.

C. Definitions

Employability Skills are the foundational academic, practical and interpersonal skills required across industries and career paths.

General Education is a subset of Liberal Education which is shared by all students at a particular university.

Liberal Education is “an approach to college learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity and change. This approach emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture and society) as well as in depth achievement in a specific field of interest. It helps students develop a sense of social responsibility; strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills; and the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real world settings” (AAC&U LEAP).

Pa Public School Code, 24 Section 20-2002-C refers to legislation that directs Pennsylvania public institutions of higher education to accept for transfer foundation

courses and accept with full junior standing the associate of arts or the associate of science degree into parallel baccalaureate programs.

P2P refers to the legislative Pennsylvania statewide program to program articulation agreements that provide clear transfer pathways into a State System university for community college students who have selected a transferable major program.

Pa. Statewide Transfer Credit Framework refers to the 30 credit hours of foundational liberal arts in 6 categories of study which was developed to implement the legislation (Pa Public School Code, 24 Section 20-2002-C) related to transfer among public institutions of higher education.

Prior Learning refers to students learning that occurred prior to enrollment at a State System university. Prior learning includes credits earned elsewhere as well as the assessment of skills, knowledge and competencies acquired outside the classroom against a set of standards or learning outcomes. Prior learning may include documented learning such as (but not limited to) Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, DANTES, CLEP, military experience, and credit by exam.

D. Compliance with Middle States Commission on Higher Education and University responsibilities

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) provides the common ground for General Education and its assessment for all State System universities. The State System of Higher Education institutions will meet the Middle States Requirements and Standards. The current standards are listed below:

1. As institutions that offer undergraduate education, each will provide a general education program either free standing or integrated into academic disciplines that:
 - a. offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgements outside as well as within their academic field;
 - b. offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate the essential skills including at least:
 - oral and written communication
 - scientific and quantitative reasoning
 - critical analysis and reasoning
 - technological competency
 - information literacy
 - c. consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives (MSCHE standard III).
2. With regard to assessment of student learning and achievement, a regionally accredited institution will have clearly stated educational goals; organized and systematic assessment conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional

and degree/program goals. Institutions will articulate how they prepare students in a manner consistent with their mission for successful careers, meaningful lives and where appropriate, further education.

They will support and sustain assessment of student achievement and communicate the results of this assessment to stakeholder and will use assessment results for improvement of educational effectiveness. (MSCHE Standard V)

3. Within the regional accreditation framework listed above, institutions will identify student learning outcomes. Consistent with their mission, institutions will design their general education programs and requirements to assure their students achieve the desired student learning outcomes. In addition to those student learning outcomes indicated by MSCHE, this policy enables system universities to identify additional learning outcomes.

General Education Requirements

Every student who graduates from an undergraduate degree program will satisfy the General Education requirements through learning experiences at the university, course-based transfer, core to core transfer, prior learning, and/or demonstration of competency.

Baccalaureate degrees. The BOG Policy 1990-06A: Academic Degrees requires a minimum of 40 General Education credits for a baccalaureate degree; the maximum shall not exceed 48 credits. The credit hours will be focused on competencies that are consistent with liberal arts learning outcomes. General Education requirements will be consistent with the requirements of the statewide Transfer Credit Framework.

Professional bachelor's degrees such as the BFA, BM, BSN, BSW, BSEd, and BS in Business Administration identified in BOG policy 1990-06A are permitted to have General Education requirements specifically adapted to the profession but which must be consistent with the general education competencies for all students.

Associate degrees. The BOG policy 1990-06A: Academic Degrees require a minimum of 30 General Education credits for an Associate of Arts degree. Twenty-four credits of General Education are required for an Associate of Science and 21 for an Associate of Applied Science. The general education requirements should be consistent with requirements of the statewide Transfer Credit Framework.

Associate degrees designed for transfer must be aligned with the requirements identified in the parallel P2P articulation agreements.

Transfer

Middle States Commission on Higher Education standards (Standard IV) indicates that prior learning applicable to General Education will be recognized either through transfer of course credits or other transcribed equivalents.

The Board of Governors Student Transfer policy requires that State System institutions recognize the integrity, design, and validity of general education at other institutions and fully accept any completed general education coursework when comparable (though

perhaps not identical) to general education at the receiving state system institution. There shall not be a course to course equivalency analysis or requirement.

The following apply to students who matriculate at a State System institution after attending another institution(s) of higher education:

- Students who transfer from one State System institution to another State System with their general education program completed will have their general education requirements met. Universities with unique signature general education requirements may expect students to satisfy those requirements if doing so does not extend the student's time to degree.
- Students who transfer into the State System of Higher Education with an Associate degree (either an AA or AS) identified in a Program to Program (P2P) agreement as part of the Commonwealth Statewide College Credit Transfer system will be awarded full junior standing. These students will be expected to satisfy the remaining general education requirements at the receiving institution.
- Students who transfer into the State System of Higher Education with an Associate degree which is not identified as a P2P program will be expected to satisfy any remaining general education requirements.
- Students who matriculate at a State System institution without first earning an Associate degree in a transfer program will be required to complete any remaining requirements of that institution's general education program. This does not apply to students who engage in "reverse transfer" by transferring their State System institution courses and credits back to a prior institution for the purpose of earning an Associate degree.

Prior learning

In addition to transfer credits, students' learning may occur outside the college classroom. Students entering a State System institution who have met General Education student learning outcomes and competencies through mechanisms such as (but not limited to) Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, DANTES, CLEP, military experience, and credit by exam will have that learning transcribed.

All such learning will be indicated through transcription of academic credit or an alternative method to document learning.

Implementation

This policy will become effective for new undergraduate students who matriculate Fall 2018.



PA State System of Higher Education Board of Governors

Effective: January 21, 1993

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POLICY 1993-01: GENERAL EDUCATION AT STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION UNIVERSITIES

See Also:

Adopted: January 21, 1993

Amended:

A. Purposes

1. To address the Board of Governors' statutory duties to establish broad educational policies, and to prescribe minimum standards for graduation.
2. To implement recommendation #7 of *Priorities for Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education during the 1990s* (adopted by the Board of Governors in October 1990), calling for a greater emphasis on liberal education at State System universities.

B. Definitions and Rationale

The focus of this policy is on procedures for assuring that a designated segment of the undergraduate curriculum, which is required of all students and is generally referred to as **general education**, addresses appropriate goals and serves to prepare State System students as effectively as possible for life and work in the 1990s and beyond. The rationale for the policy, however, as for the *Priorities* recommendation that prompted it, relates to the broader concept of **liberal education**.

Traditionally, educators have distinguished between **professional education**, which prepares students for their life work, and **liberal education**, which prepares students for life. In today's world, where both careers and lives are subject to greater complexity and more frequent change than ever before, this distinction may be outdated.

Liberal education is essential today—regardless of the profession for which students may be preparing—to prepare them to think and communicate as professionals, to understand the societal and global context of their work, to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting and career to another, to recognize the ethical implications of

professional practice, and to balance the various dimensions of their personal and professional lives

At the same time, liberal education is ever more essential in preparing students for the challenges and choices they face in their roles as partners, parents, friends, consumers, and lifelong learners—roles that have become more complicated and demanding than they were even a generation ago. Perhaps, above all, liberal education in the 1990s is critical for preparing students to be responsible citizens of pluralistic communities, a democratic country, and the global society of the 21st century.

Thus, while study within and across the arts and sciences disciplines forms the basis for the general education curriculum, the most important outcomes—the liberal education outcomes—will consist not so much in the mastery of particular bodies of knowledge as in the acquisition of the skills, values, awareness, understanding, perspective, and appreciation needed for continuing professional and personal growth in a rapidly changing world. To achieve the outcomes of a liberal education, imaginative, deliberate, and rigorous approaches to the design of general education and to its integration with other parts of the curriculum and the college experience are called for.

C. Procedures

To insure the quality, currency, and effectiveness of the general education portion of the undergraduate curriculum, State System universities shall:

1. Develop an institutional statement of general education goals and rationale to guide the design of the general education curriculum.
2. Develop written criteria, which may include pedagogical considerations, for inclusion of courses or other experiences in the general education program, and a process for reviewing and approving courses that meet the criteria and address the university's goals for general education.
3. Develop effective means for communicating the goals and explaining the rationale and significance, as well as the specific requirements, of the general education program to students, parents, and other constituencies.
4. Develop processes for assessing outcomes of the general education program and for including the general education program in the university's program review cycle to assure the continued improvement, currency, and vitality of general education; summaries of general education reviews should be submitted to the Office of Academic and Student Affairs in the same manner as reports on other program reviews.
5. Include in the university's faculty professional development program opportunities for faculty to gain assistance, as might be needed, in developing

and teaching courses that address the goals of the university's general education program and in assessing student outcomes with relation to those goals.

D. Recommended Liberal Education Goals

A State System task force of faculty and administrators knowledgeable about general education programs developed the following list of goals or outcomes, based on the sample list included in Priorities recommendation #7(a). The list reflects recommendations and models commonly set forth in the national literature on general education.

None of these goals should be understood as equating to one or more specific courses. They may be addressed in countless curricular (and co-curricular) configurations. Moreover, the goals may be interpreted as outcomes to be realized through students' entire undergraduate experience, as some should certainly be addressed through work in the academic major and through co-curricular experiences, as well as within the general education portion of the curriculum.

In developing or reviewing their own goal statements, designing general education curricula, and considering the integration of general education with the rest of the undergraduate curricula, State System university faculty and administrators should use these goals as guidelines or benchmarks.

1. Skill in various forms of inquiry, abstract logical thinking, inductive reasoning, critical analysis, and ability to find and use information.
2. Communication skills—including those required for effective reading, writing, speaking, and listening—and awareness of the challenges of cross-cultural communication.
3. Ability to understand numerical data and use mathematical methods for analysis and problem-solving.
4. Basic understanding of the natural and social sciences and their significance in contemporary society.
5. Historical consciousness, i.e., understanding of ideas, events, persons, and creative expressions from the past.
6. Awareness of the social, economic, political, and environmental interdependence of countries and regions of the world.
7. Understanding of how people's experiences and perspectives are shaped by gender, ethnicity, culture, and other factors that distinguish groups of people, coupled with recognition of common elements within human experience that transcend time, space, race, and circumstances.

8. Appreciation of and experience with literature and the arts.
9. Understanding of the role of values in personal, professional, and civic life; experience in recognizing and analyzing ethical issues.

E. Implementation

Several State System universities are already in a position to certify compliance with this policy and may submit statements explaining the university's status with regard to items C (1-5) in this policy to the Office of Academic and Student Affairs soon after Board adoption of the policy. All State System universities should submit such statements when they believe they are in a position to certify compliance with Section C, but not later than December 1994. The Board will receive a report on policy implementation in January 1995.

Valid until
August 2018