Breadth of Degree Programs and SUNY General Education Requirements Policy

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Background Information:

Purpose

As a college of arts and sciences, Empire State College expects students to acquire the qualities of a broadly educated person. Also, as an institution of the State University of New York, Empire State College is required to implement the policy of the SUNY Board of Trustees regarding general education enacted December 1998. (Taken from policy statements below) This policy outlines college expectations regarding breadth and general education in Empire State College associate’s and baccalaureate degrees.

Definitions

Statements

Breadth in Degree Programs

The purpose of a college education is to enable students both to accumulate information and to appreciate what is learned in a broad context, relate what is being learned to what is already known, judge what one is told rather than merely accept it and use what is learned in a practical and intellectual way.

The student's learning should extend beyond a single, narrow discipline or field. The student should demonstrate an understanding of several diverse perspectives (e.g., historical, literary, scientific, technological, aesthetic, ethical, international, multicultural and gender-based) and be
able to apply such perspectives to situations in which they must analyze, explain or solve problems related to human behavior, society and the natural world.

**SUNY General Education Requirements**

As an institution of the State University of New York, Empire State College is required to implement the policy of the SUNY Board of Trustees regarding general education, enacted December 1998. Students are encouraged to become familiar with the following requirements at an early stage of their studies, and to discuss with their mentor how to appropriately incorporate them into their degree program.

The State University of New York's general education requirement applies to all state-operated institutions offering undergraduate degrees. It requires associate and bachelor’s degree candidates, as a condition of graduation, to complete a general education program of no fewer than 30 credit hours specifically designed to achieve the student learning outcomes in seven of 10 knowledge and skill areas, listed below, which must include both mathematics and basic communication. Students will select five different content areas from the remaining eight content areas. Students also must demonstrate competency in critical thinking/reasoning and information management as specified below.

**Knowledge and Skill Areas**

1. **Mathematics**

Students will show competency in the following quantitative reasoning skills:

- arithmetic
- algebra
- geometry
- data analysis
- quantitative reasoning

2. **Natural Sciences**

Students will demonstrate:

- understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence and employment of mathematical analysis
- application of scientific data, concepts, and models in one of the natural sciences.

3. **Social Sciences**

Students will demonstrate:
understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis

knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.

4. American History

Students will demonstrate:

- knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social, and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society
- knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups
- understanding of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

5. Western Civilization

Students will demonstrate:

- knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of Western civilization
- relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.

6. Other World Civilizations

Students will demonstrate:

- knowledge of either a broad outline of world history, or the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of one non-Western civilization.

7. Humanities

Students will demonstrate:

- knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the general education program.

8. The Arts

Students will demonstrate understanding of at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein.

9. Foreign Languages

Students will demonstrate:
• basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language
• knowledge of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language they are studying.

10. Basic Communications

Students will:
• produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms
• demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts
• research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details
• develop proficiency in oral discourse
• evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.

Competencies

The following two competencies should be diffused throughout the general education program:

1. Critical Thinking (Reasoning)

Students will:
• identify, analyze and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others’ work
• develop well-reasoned arguments.

2. Information Management

Students will:
• perform the basic operations of personal computer use
• understand and use basic research techniques
• locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

Central to the mission of SUNY-Empire State College is the use of “innovative, alternative and flexible approaches to higher education that transform people and communities by providing rigorous programs that connect individuals’ unique and diverse lives to their personal learning goals” (ESC Mission Statement). Our approach to General Education therefore includes options for both courses and individualized studies.

Approval of General Education Courses

Working in conjunction with an associate dean or designee, members of the academic unit responsible for completing the General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) will work together to form a committee to assess general education applications for their ability to fulfill the general education requirement. Once this committee has determined that the course fulfills
the general education requirement, the course document will be sent to SUNY for review and approval, with the ultimate goal of having the course listed within Open SUNY.

Approval of General Education Individualized Studies

Empire State College reserves the designations “Topics in…” (as below) to indicate independent studies whose learning outcomes have been approved as meeting a SUNY General Education requirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>General Education Requirement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topics in Mathematics</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topics in Natural Sciences</td>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
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<td>Topics in Social Sciences</td>
<td>Social Science</td>
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<td>Topics in American History</td>
<td>American History</td>
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<td>Topics in Western Civilization</td>
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<td>Other World Civilization</td>
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<td>Topics in Humanities</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
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<td>Topics in the Arts</td>
<td>The Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topics in Foreign Languages</td>
<td>Foreign Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topics in Basic Communication</td>
<td>Basic Communication</td>
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The divisions of the college responsible for reviewing the general education requirement will determine a common description and set of learning objectives/outcomes that would allow a study within this field to meet the general education requirement. The general title will then be evaluated for its appropriateness to fulfill the general education component, using the same process described above, in the section titled “Approval of General Education Courses.”

Faculty will have the opportunity to individualize these courses by adding to the agreed-upon course description and learning outcomes and by devising learning activities for the course. They will also be able to individualize the course title by adding a subtitle.

For instance, Topics in Natural Sciences: The Science of Pigments would use the catalog description of and meet all of the learning outcomes for “Topics in Natural Sciences.” An additional description would explain the specific topics to be covered and learning outcomes expected within the course.

Studies that fulfill more than one general education requirement should be reviewed by the relevant divisions.

Applicable Legislation and Regulations

The policy of the SUNY Board of Trustees regarding general education, enacted December 1998.
Related References, Policies, Procedures, Forms and Appendices

Related Policies: Advanced Standing Credit: Transcript Credit; Policy and Procedures for Degree Program and Portfolio Review and Approval; Policy on Educational Planning Studies; Individual Prior Learning Assessment Policy and Procedures; Degree Program Rationale; Individualized Program Design: Bachelor’s Degrees; Individualized Program Design: Associate Degrees