ARIZONA BOARD OF REGENTS POLICY MANUAL
2-210 General Education
Revision Dates 6/12/2025, 2/12/2021, 6/14/2019 (adopted)

Purpose

Undergraduate education at the university level should lead to graduating an educated person. The university's education programs should represent the distinctiveness of the university while providing graduates with the knowledge, including concepts, skills, competencies, and intellectual habits that prepare them to take their place in our republic and the world. It should prepare graduates to pursue careers or advanced degrees, and participate fully as informed citizens in a robust constitutional democracy based in values of individual freedom, self-reliance, and equality under the law, and constructive dialog through civil discourse. As advances in technology also promote exponential increases in human knowledge, graduates need the foundational cognitive and behavioral skills necessary to adapt quickly to change. In this environment of rapidly evolving knowledge, universities should design general education and majors such that graduates' persistence, resiliency, and adaptability are realized via the whole of the curriculum.

Persistence, resiliency, and adaptability are not acquired through a single course. For this reason, the knowledge, concepts, general skills, and intellectual habits transcend any individual course and must be scaffolded throughout the curriculum that composes an academic program. A general education program alongside a student's major(s), therefore, provide a holistic, comprehensive undergraduate education. It is expected that learning opportunities across a student's entire undergraduate education build upon each other in an integrative manner that promotes the cumulative progression of skills and a substantial body of knowledge that reflects a breadth and depth of perspectives. Beyond knowledge acquisition, the learning process takes place through the progression to the degree.

Within a student's overall education, a general education program must offer a coherent set of learning opportunities that provide students with a foundation of knowledge and skills that helps them to place their chosen areas of study within a wider context and prepares them to be productive citizens. To do so, students must understand how the traditional branches of knowledge can be situated within a broad perspective that enables them to comprehend change, cultures and diverse experiences, and local and global regions. Students must be challenged to apply course content with the expectation that their knowledge and skills lead them to think critically, innovatively, and creatively, to reason quantitatively, to communicate effectively, to understand and use rhetorical skills, and to collaborate in solving problems.

Constructive engagement with complex challenges requires that today's graduates develop the ability to integrate knowledge and perspectives across disciplines and cultures in a purpose-driven, creative, problem-solving manner. Integration of opportunities for students to practice civil discourse and civic engagement and to build their knowledge of the principles of American institutions is important given the complicated challenges we face in our own republic and in relationship to the rest of the world. General education is guided by the core principle that the educated person needs to be empowered with the knowledge, skills, and intellectual habits that will become their foundation for a lifetime commitment to learning, persistence, resilience, and adaptability.

In accordance with the requirements stated below, each university should develop a general education program that will excite and educate students in ways they find valuable and interesting, and that faculty, administrators, and regents agree meet the policy's guidance.

A. Requirements of General Education Programs

1. Each university will have a set of general education requirements consisting of a minimum of 32 semester credits of coursework. Sequencing of courses is expected as a means of improving learning throughout the degree program, recognizing that learning opportunities across a student's entire undergraduate education – general education and chosen major – build upon each other in an integrative manner that promotes the cumulative progression of acquisition of skills and a substantial body of knowledge that constitutes an educated person. The general education curriculum must be designed such that all students receive exposure multiple times to the targeted knowledge, intellectual skills, and habits, and no student can avoid areas of core knowledge, nor key intellectual skills and habits.

2. General education requirements should be distributed among areas of knowledge to ensure opportunities for students to develop a breadth of disciplinary perspectives. These knowledge areas should include Literature; Fine Arts and Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; American Institutions, which includes the study of Economics Theory and U.S. History; Natural Sciences; Composition, Communication and Rhetoric; and Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning – and must also include a clear and direct education around questions related to ethics, civility, and equality.

   The study of American Institutions will include at minimum (I) how the history of the United States continues to shape the present; (II) the basic principles of American constitutional democracy and how they are applied under a republican form of government; (III) the United States Constitution and major American constitutional debates and developments; (IV) the

essential founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of American Institutions of self-governance; (V) landmark Supreme Court cases that have shaped law and society; (VI) the civic actions necessary for effective citizenship and civic participation in a self-governing society – for example civil dialog and civil disagreement; and (VII) basic economic knowledge to critically assess public policy options and to inform professional and personal decisions.

3. Each university will incorporate skills-based learning outcomes into its general education program. These skills/competencies will include written and oral communication, critical thinking, teamwork, intercultural competency, application of ideas to real-world situations, and time management. These skills/competencies will also integrate the teaching of life skills that respond to the realities of 21st century, including, as examples: information and data literacy; differentiation among fact, inference, and judgment; and civic engagement and civil discourse grounded in fundamental civic knowledge.

4. Completion of a general education program should also support development of the habits of mind that define an educated person. Each university should design its general education coursework to include learning objectives that address the development of habits of mind such as: intellectual integrity; understanding of reasoning and evidence; open-mindedness to different views and the ability to suspend judgment until convincing evidence is available or until the bases for these differences are understood; pursuit of truth with the personal characteristics of initiative, humility, curiosity and intellectual commitment; and the pursuit of a line of inquiry to its logical conclusion no matter the conclusion.

B. General Education Design and Assessment

1. Universities will engage in continuous assessment. Assessment processes will ascertain the extent to which graduates have met the clearly defined learning outcomes. Assessment findings will be used to inform continuous improvement efforts.

2. Each university will recognize the learning outcomes (concepts and competencies) associated with general education and the major are cumulative and not based on isolated projects or single courses. Skills/competencies are developed by repetition and sequencing across the curriculum.

3. Each university will recognize that general education contributes to the whole of the educated person. Courses from majors and electives provide the broader frame of learning in which students engage their education coupled with the larger learning environment of the university with

speakers, clubs, and other opportunities to engage ideas, activities, and issues. Thus, evaluation of general education is also part and parcel of the review of the learning outcomes of each degree program which are reflected in the academic program reviews.

4. Each university will establish a schedule to evaluate its general education program to ensure that, within the identified categories of knowledge, the essential learning outcomes and competencies are acquired by graduates. This process is intended to assure that concepts and competencies are being taught with sufficient rigor, depth, and breadth to realize the graduation of educated persons and knowledgeable engaged citizens. Effective assessment depends fundamentally upon measurement and does not rely exclusively on a single project or capstone courses. It includes the identification of learning outcomes, the assessment methods, and the internal and external measures that will inform curricular refinements and allow faculty and administrators to reconsider programs that do not meet expectations in terms of learned concepts and competencies. It also includes measurement of the extent to which graduates have acquired the intended concepts and skills that represent the distinctive university's expectations for an educated person.

5. Each university will utilize robust assessment instruments, based on national standards or locally developed, to gauge whether students master the essential learning outcomes and intellectual qualities that are outlined in the policy.

6. As required by the board from time-to-time, each university will report on its general education evaluation process and the results of those evaluations; and periodic programmatic evaluations will demonstrate that the concepts and competencies are learned and that programmatic changes are informed by the process.

C. Community College Transfer Students

1. Each university's general education program requirement is satisfied by an Arizona Public Community College transfer student's completion of the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) before transferring to an Arizona public university. The articulation agreements are discussed and supported by AZ Transfer, a consortium of academic administrators from the three universities, Arizona public and tribal community colleges, and the board.

2. Each university will work with Arizona community college systems to develop pathways that satisfy general education requirements.

D. Satisfying the General Education Requirement by Other Means

1. Customarily, the general education requirements are met through completion of the university's general education programs, but these requirements may be met through innovative board approved programs that meet the same learning outcomes specified in these guidelines.

Universities are encouraged to allow students to obtain general education credit by other means such as advanced placement ("AP"), international baccalaureate ("IB"), college level examination programs ("CLEP"), prior learning assessments, recognized assessment of military service proficiencies, and departmental challenge examinations. General education requirement satisfaction will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for any students who transfer to an Arizona public university.

Policy History

6/14/2019 Approved by the Board on second reading.

2/12/2021 Policy revision approved by the Board on second reading.

6/12/2025 Policy revision approved by the Board on second reading.

Related Information