

University-Wide General Education Committee (UWGEC) Report to Faculty Senate for November 3, 2025 Meeting

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The University-Wide General Education Committee (UWGEC) is a shared governance body with 22 members, most of whom are faculty members representing Colleges that are active in teaching General Education courses, along with two student representatives, three Foundations area representatives, a library representative, and a chair appointed in consultation between the Chair of the Faculty and the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. A list of current UWGEC members can be found here: <https://ge.arizona.edu/gened-committee/uwgec-members>.

Since my last report, UWGEC has held two biweekly meetings, on October 15 and October 29. During this time, in addition to working our way through course approvals, our most urgent task has been the time-sensitive **implementation of the new Civic Learning requirements**, approved by Faculty Senate on October 6. Office of General Education (OGE) staff have been working diligently to prepare materials for UWGEC to review and approve, ensuring shared governance involvement in all aspects of the implementation. On October 15, they presented several recommendations and issues to decide, and we approved the proposed wording of a student learning outcome for the civic depth attribute:

From one or more disciplinary, professional, and/or social perspectives, students will be able to demonstrate how civic knowledge supports the functioning of societies, engaged citizenship, and/or effective government at the local, national, and/or global levels and construct evidence-based arguments about civic action.

After some initial discussion at the October 15 meeting, at our next meeting on October 29, we approved several other key elements of the civic depth attribute that will be part of the review process, including a name for the attribute – **Civic Exploration** – along with several other features: that only Exploring Perspectives (EP) and Building Connections (BC) (i.e. not Civic Institutions courses) will be eligible for the Civic Exploration attribute, that courses carrying the Civics Attribute should provide students with a focused exploration of one or more of the seven ABOR areas (see Appendix A), but may also include comparative approaches or closely related areas, that exploration of civic area(s) should be significantly woven into the course in a similar way to the expectations for other General Education attributes, and that civic elements should be accessible to students from a wide range of disciplinary interests and backgrounds.

Faculty across campus will now be encouraged to propose courses with the Civic Exploration attribute, which is now available along with existing attribute options (e.g., Quantitative Reasoning, World Cultures & Societies, Writing), and we anticipate one more attribute option will be forthcoming in November. For a streamlined process to help recognize existing EP & BC courses that already are aligned with the Civic Exploration attribute, and enable these courses to be coded in the system as such, a special eligibility window has been opened up through Dec. 1, 2025, for anyone with an already-approved EP or BC course to complete an abbreviated course proposal form that simply asks for the elements indicating alignment with Civic Exploration (i.e. rationale box, at least one course objective, and integration into signature assignment) to make this process easier for faculty. OGE staff have already begun providing instructor support and meetings for this.

We have also begun reviewing elements and course proposal review features for the **Civic Institutions required breadth course** (students will choose one course from a menu of options) that all students will have to take, starting in 2026-27. At our Oct 29 meeting, we discussed a draft student learning outcome for Civic Institutions (along with some alternatives) and the expectations for alignment with the seven American Institutions areas identified in ABOR policy (see Appendix A), with more feedback to be sought by members from their constituents in the next two weeks before we make any final decision to approve these elements on Nov. 12. In addition, we approved an expectation for course review proposed by OGE that Civic Institutions courses may identify either one perspective or multiple perspectives, which are disciplines, social positions, or professional perspectives. This will enable Civic Institutions courses to be well integrated into the General Education curriculum but will also provide maximal flexibility for instructors on how to do this.

At the Oct 15 meeting, we also reviewed a proposal from the Eller College of Management asking for an exemption from the **Second Language Foundations** requirement for their Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree. By a 12-5 vote, with 2 abstentions, UWGEC voted to deny this request, and also to provide an accompanying rationale statement (Appendix B) that foregrounds our preference for a university-wide policy rather than reviewing college by college exceptions, as well as our belief in the value of the Second Language requirement as a part of General Education. We look forward to continued dialogue with administration about how to adjust Second Language policy in a consistent manner across campus. Last spring, on May 7, 2025 (as noted in my last report),

we already approved nearly all the recommendations of the Second Language Task Force, with the exception of the provision that would allow for the same two years of high school language that meet the admissions requirement to also count for the General Education requirement even without a proficiency exam. UWGEC's statement from last May (see Appendix C) expresses our viewpoint that there are already multiple viable pathways to better ensure second semester college level competency, including some new ones, provided for in the policy revision. As noted in my October report, a definite majority of the committee (though not unanimous), as of this fall, is now open to the idea of a compromise whereby three (or four) years of high school language could meet the requirement even in the absence of a proficiency exam, on the grounds that attainment of second semester college level competency is far more likely in that scenario. We look forward to continued dialogue through the shared governance process to ensure faculty approval of a consistent and workable policy that applies across campus for Foundations Second Language.

We also briefly considered a few other discussion items. At our Oct 15 meeting, we affirmed, upon advice from the Writing across the Curriculum experts on campus, that we do not have any objection to courses serving both as **Writing attribute courses within General Education and as upper division Writing Emphasis courses** within the major. Such courses are relatively rare, since there are only a limited number of 300 level courses in Gen Ed, but after Abbie Sorg of the Registrar's office conducted a search at our request, we discovered about a dozen of them so far. At our Oct 29 meeting, we spent some time discussing the **Course Substitutions** changes that were included in the package of policy revisions presented in mid-August to us by the Office of Undergraduate Education (see my October report for more details). Several members raised concerns about shifting the authority for course substitutions in General Education out of colleges (mainly determined by academic advisors) to make the decision centralized at the Office of Undergraduate Education, most likely determined by the Office of General Education, and then recognized across campus regardless of any change of college or major. Some issues discussed include the much larger topic of transfer credit policy, which would not be affected by the policy revision, for which academic advisors in the colleges would still retain authority to make determinations about transfer credit in alignment with the policy guidelines, and also a potential need for distinguishing between Foundations courses and the other categories for Gen Ed (BC, EP, and Civic Institutions). We have not yet been able to come to a vote on this topic, and we look forward to continued dialogue and information gathering on campus, including with the advising community, and potentially also bringing forward any updates to transfer credit policy at the same time, for the sake of clarity.

Since the last report, UWGEC has approved the following courses for addition to the General Education curriculum, and they have completed all revisions if required:

DATA 101 Data Science: Big Data, AI, and Us (BC, QR attribute)

ESOC 120 Creative Information with AI (BC, Writing attribute)

HPS/GHI 303 Immersive Experiences in Women's Health Research (BC, QR attribute)

MUS 104 Who Cares About Classical Music? (BC, Writing attribute)

Note: BC = Building Connections; EP = Exploring Perspectives; QR = Quantitative Reasoning; WCS = World Cultures & Societies

We also approved a lengthy list of courses to carry the Foundations Mathematics designation, nearly all of which were previously listed directly in policy language for one of the three former "strands" before the policy was streamlined last spring and have been judged as appropriate by the implementation group that includes an expert from the Mathematics Department.

If anyone has questions about this, or any of the above, please contact me (jvetter@arizona.edu) and I will be happy to explain anything further or convey your feedback and comments to UWGEC.

Appendix A: Excerpt from ABOR Policy 2-210

"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."

Appendix B: UWGEC Statement on Denial of Request from Eller College of Management for Exemption from Foundations Second Language (adopted 10/15/2025)

UWGEC recently discussed Eller College of Management's proposal that students in their Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Degree be extended the "Engineering exception" to the Foundations Second Language requirement.

The memo accompanying the request cited the need for additional coursework in the major, including courses on Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Data analytics, and Digital Transformations strategies in support of student's career trajectories, pointing out that a significant portion of comparable institutions do not have such a requirement (while also that many do in fact have such a requirement). The memo concludes with the argument that "Rather than maintaining a traditional requirement that provides limited career value for most business students, we can offer specialized technical education that directly enhances our graduates' employability and professional advancement opportunities."

While UWGEC admires and supports Eller's efforts to ensure that their graduates can be successful in the careers they may choose to pursue after graduation, ultimately UWGEC voted against this requested change to policy for a few reasons:

1.) UWGEC is considering a broader policy and would prefer to create a consistent, coherent policy rather than an *ad hoc* and changing list of exceptions.

Following up on the recommendations of the Second Language Task Force convened in the 2024–2025 Academic Year, and proposals from the Office of the Provost in conjunction with the Registrar, UWGEC has debated and approved updated policies, including changes to the Foundations: Second Language category. These changes would open still more pathways to satisfaction of the requirement outside of language courses (on top of the many pathways already accepted).

UWGEC has explicitly rejected in multiple discussions and at least one formal vote, the extension of the practice of satisfying our Foundations requirement by assuming (in the absence of evidence) that two years of high school course work achieves the same learning as two semesters of university, i.e. the method chosen by the College of Engineering, which Eller seeks to adopt for the BSBA. Experts in the teaching of language and culture have pointed out that this method is unlikely to be a reliable measure of assessing the learning or experiences of students given the diversity of high school experiences and the shortage of qualified teachers in many high school language programs, and object to its current use in the College of Engineering. UWGEC looks forward to faculty governance and administration aligning on and

approving a clear and consistent policy that supports the place of language work in the general education curriculum and as a university-level requirement (not just an admissions requirement), but does not wish to pass *ad hoc* exceptions, a practice which the administration specifically highlighted as undesirable, confusing, and contrary to the best practice of having a single Gen Ed policy for all students.

It is true that our current policy does not achieve that goal, and the “Engineering exception” does violate that principle. We recognize that this long-standing exception was driven by similar needs (the desire for a major to prepare students for a specialized career with specific accrediting requirements), but many on UWGEC are ultimately unsatisfied with the strategy employed by the College of Engineering which seems to not take seriously the role of language proficiency in the General Education program. That is, were the “Engineering Exception” put in front of UWGEC today, it is not clear that policy would pass this committee’s vote.

Our goal is not to hold students in the Eller College of Management to a different standard than students in the College of Engineering, or to treat the colleges themselves unequally, but rather to ensure that students in both (and indeed, all) colleges have a consistent program and rationale. We ask for your patience while we move forward to that goal on a broad policy level.

2.) UWGEC affirms the notion that a University of Arizona education is more than just career training. While we recognize that students in the BSBA program have a lot to learn both to be prepared for their careers and to meet requirements of accrediting bodies, the University of Arizona has repeatedly affirmed the value of a broad general education curriculum which serves every student by “supporting the development of the habits of mind that define an educated person.” ([ABOR policy manual 2-210](#), A.4) Both UWGEC and the Provost’s Second Language Task Force repeatedly affirm the place of Second Language courses and skills in the training of those habits of mind.

UWGEC also notes that such courses and skills support the overall [Student Learning Outcomes for General Education](#) at the University of Arizona, including all four major elements: the ability to Think Critically, Communicate Effectively, to Understand and Value Differences, and to Use Information Effectively and Ethically. Language courses and training are an integral piece of these aims, as well as the charge from ABOR that students “receive exposure multiple times” and that pieces of material “build upon each other in an integrative manner.” ([ABOR policy manual](#)

[2-210](#), A.1). That is, Foundations Language courses (and/or the other ways students can establish their proficiency in second language) align with and support other efforts. Language training serves alongside courses with the World Cultures and Societies attribute to help students “Understand and Value Differences.” Language experience serves alongside courses with the writing attribute and foundations writing courses to help students “Communicate Effectively.” Second Language learning promotes critical thinking and information literacy alongside efforts in those areas as well.

While this is not the venue to defend every piece of the General Education curriculum, it is important to note that it has been designed and approved as a curriculum that works with all its parts to ensure that all our students, whatever their careers turn out to be (or not to be), walk away with a solidly broad university education that will be applicable to their future lives as humans and citizens as well as workers. In the light of a competitive world in which both programs and universities compete for students and funding, it is part of UWGEC’s role to protect the quality and breadth of students’ general education, even as colleges and departments work to protect the quality and depth of students’ education in their major and minor field(s). In programs where students’ major coursework occupies so many of their 120 university units, it becomes more (not less) important that the students have an opportunity to robustly satisfy all components of general education work in their required courses.

It should be noted that there are many pathways to satisfaction of the Second Language requirement, many of which require fewer than 8 units and in some cases as few as 0 units. Unless or until the requirement is substantively changed, we would encourage Eller advisors and faculty to consider advising students to take advantage of previous language training by having students whenever possible proceed into second-semester courses in their first semester (when recall of previously studied material is highest), to take advantage of the university administered proficiency exams, and/or other methods of satisfaction. The language requirement is the only foundations requirement that can be satisfied with no coursework. It should also be noted that other units on campus have been exploring the development of specific language offerings that serve the needs of students in their colleges, and that departments that teach language are generally very open to these kinds of collaborations that might allow Eller students to satisfy the second language requirement and learn major-specific content or skills in the same course(s).

Appendix C: UWGEC Statement on Foundations Second Language Policy Revision (adopted 5/7/2025)

UWGEC discussions around the proposal from the provost's office regarding the Foundations Second Language requirement were lengthy due to a few significant issues, which we detail here in hopes that other faculty governance bodies can understand the recommendation we have made, and hopefully move the proposal forward in a productive manner.

UWGEC acknowledges that the original proposal includes several important and positive changes, including:

- the standardization of Foundations portion of the second language requirement across all degree types
- the flexibility afforded to B.A. students on how they continue second language study (in the same or another language)
- new ways of satisfying the second language requirement (Seal of Biliteracy, certain language-intensive programs)

UWGEC also has significant concerns and reservations about high school coursework satisfying university requirements with no further proof of learning accomplished or outcomes achieved, and especially with the designation of 2 years of high school coursework (the same standard as university admissions requirement) as the equivalent of our second semester course-requirement.

Many members of UWGEC objected to this arrangement on principle out of a concern that this *de facto* undermined the Task Force's commitment to the importance of the Second Language requirement at the university. Others were concerned that this would set a precedent, eventually allowing high school coursework (without demonstration of proficiency or learning) to undermine foundations requirements in math and writing as well.

Subject matter experts pointed out that there is (in Arizona and nationwide) a shortage of qualified language teachers, meaning that in many cases students' high school experiences do not represent as substantive an engagement with another language or culture as the title of the course might suggest. The university cannot and should not be in the business of deciding which high schools or teachers are "good enough" to count, nor should it be deeming all high school experiences equal or satisfactory (especially in the absence of data to indicate that that is a reasonable assumption), and given the experiences of second language instructors at the UofA and those familiar with the

placement and proficiency exams which indicate students with similar quantities of coursework arrive at the university with vastly different skill sets.

UWGEC nevertheless acknowledges that the Second Language Task Force did recommend (in its most contentious vote) that students be allowed to satisfy their Foundations requirement with High School coursework, recommending an arrangement similar to that currently used by the College of Engineering and sought after by some other non-B.A. programs. We understand that those programs (given the massive unit loads demanded by program needs or accrediting bodies) are often challenging for students to complete in 4 years, and that programs are attempting to ensure that barriers to student success are minimized. This is a worthwhile and important goal, though data showing that second languages represent a consistent or unique barrier to students' success are lacking.

Given all of the above, UWGEC has approved the policy with the following change:

- **OPTION 1:** Removing the following text from the “Course Completion’ section of the “Ways to satisfy the Requirement” (p.8-9): “One year of coursework taken in a second language at the high school level will be considered the equivalent of one semester at the post-secondary level.”
 - Students could still use the other 5 ways to satisfy the requirement in addition to university level coursework (Proficiency Exam, Credit by Exam (including CLEP, AP, IB, etc.), Seal of Biliteracy, Language-Intensive University Sponsored Study Abroad & Multilingual Learning Experiences, and/or International Admission).
 - Note: This would effectively remove the “Engineering Exception” as it currently stands, creating an equal playing field across the university, but is likely to be vociferously opposed by the College of Engineering and other units interested in helping their students bypass this requirement without demonstrating proficiency.

UWGEC also discussed two other alternative revisions to address this concern, both of which had some support, but neither of which was incorporated into the motion that was passed by UWGEC to move forward the Second Language Foundations policy changes:

- **OPTION 2A:** Revising the following text from the “Course Completion’ section of the “Ways to satisfy the Requirement” (p.8-9): “~~One~~ **Two** years of coursework taken in a second language at the high school level will be considered the equivalent of one semester at the post-secondary level.”
 - This maintains a pathway through high school coursework, but at a higher standard. Based on the experiences of subject matter experts, students who

have taken 4 years of High School language are much more likely to have had substantial experience and learning (both in terms of language proficiency and in terms of the other cultural and communicative aims of the second language requirement). The number of students who would do 4 years of language in high school and not pass a proficiency test at the second semester level is vanishingly small. And this option would therefore save students who have done this work from the extra hurdle of taking the proficiency test.

- **OPTION 2B:** Revising the following text from the “Course Completion’ section of the “Ways to satisfy the Requirement” (p.8-9): “~~One~~ **Three** years of coursework taken in a second language at the high school level will be considered the equivalent of **two** semesters at the post-secondary level.”

- This has most of the same advantages as Option 2A but acknowledges (accurately) that a majority of students who have done 3 years of language would have had substantial experience and learning. While there will still likely be some students whose high school experiences were less thorough than we would hope, the third year of a high school language learning experience tends to be a major turning point, with substantially more sophisticated language use and deeper cultural work and thus represents a substantive leap forward compared to second year. Most students who take 3 years of High School could pass a language proficiency test at the second semester level.

UWGEC also recommends that the multiple use of courses be changed to better reflect the new B.A. standards, with the revision to the language on p. 24:

~~Third- and fourth-semester level~~ **Second language courses taken to satisfy the Second Language requirement for a Bachelor of Arts degree may also apply to a major, pre-major, minor, and/or certificate (see Courses Excluded from the Minor).**