

THE BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL EDUCATION

CERTIFICATION OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION STATUS OF A BCC COURSE: POLICY AND PROCESS

1. The Committee on General Education will consider existing courses only – i.e., courses that have been approved for inclusion in the BCC Catalog and that have been assessed by the online NJ Transfer articulation system (www.njtransfer.org).
2. The general education course list will include college-level courses only.
3. Courses must fit into the structure of the BCC General Education Program (Communication, Humanities, Mathematics & Computer Science, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Wellness and Exercise Science).
4. Proposals to the Committee must be in the form of a completed "Application for General Education Course Certification" (form available at www.bergen.edu/gened/gecourse_propose2.pdf), accompanied by all required or necessary attachments. The Application must be signed by the appropriate Discipline Coordinator and/or Department Head, as applicable, and by the appropriate Divisional Dean.¹ The sponsor of the proposal must forward twenty-five (25) copies of the proposal, together with all supporting materials, to the chairperson of the Committee on General Education not later than one week in advance of a Committee meeting date. The Committee chairperson will notify the sponsor of the time, date, and place of the meeting at which the proposal will be considered by the Committee. The sponsor of the proposal must attend said meeting and be prepared to address any issues raised by the Committee.
5. Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the Committee's written standards and criteria for defining a general education course (see following pages).
6. Courses currently on the general education course list will also be re-evaluated for retention or deletion on the basis of this new policy.
7. Proposals and resolutions on this matter approved by the Committee on General Education shall proceed directly from the Committee to the Faculty Senate for final action. The sponsor of such a proposal must attend the Faculty Senate meeting at which the proposal is up for discussion.

¹Henceforth, the BCC Committee on General Education will hear and act on course and curriculum proposals only when such proposals are sponsored by, and are presented to the Committee by a member (or members) of, the discipline and/or department that will offer and administer the course or curriculum proposed." General Education Committee resolution, dated 10/27/02, approved by the BCC Faculty Senate, 3/11/03.

Standards for General Education Courses at Bergen Community College

1. A course proposed for general education certification at Bergen Community College must fit within one of the following six areas of study:²

1. Communications, which includes courses in reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and other courses designed to enhance facility in the English language.
2. Humanities, which includes the fields of arts and media, history, literature, philosophy and religion, and world languages and cultures. General education courses in these fields emphasize cognitive comprehension, appreciation, and criticism of the human intellectual and cultural heritage.
3. Mathematics and Computer Science, which includes courses in college-level mathematics and computer science. General education courses in this area are designed to provide students with a conceptual understanding of the nature and applications of mathematics and computer science, with special emphasis on quantitative reasoning and algorithmic approaches to the specification, analysis, and solution of problems.
4. Natural Sciences, which includes courses in the physical and biological sciences. Such courses focus on the disciplined, scientific study of the natural world and are designed to provide students with a conceptual understanding of the nature of science and its methods of inquiry.
5. Social Sciences, which includes courses in economics, geography, political science, psychology, and sociology and anthropology. General education courses in the social sciences concentrate on the promotion of self-awareness and social-mindedness in students; on major social, economic, and political problems of contemporary society; and on the responsibilities of citizenship in the modern world.
6. Wellness and Exercise Science, which includes theoretically-based courses concentrating on the principles of bodily well-being and on the relationship between bodily well-being and other dimensions of human existence.

²This curricular structure was established in the early 1980s in NJAC 9:4-1.6(d)1.-5. That structure has been retained in the current Statewide Articulation agreement (see www.bergen.edu/gened).

2. A course proposed for general education certification at Bergen Community College must provide students with the opportunity to develop writing and critical thinking skills through a variety of appropriate critical thinking and writing assignments.³

3. The following list of fourteen propositions describes key characteristics of a general education course. A course proposed for general education certification at Bergen Community College must meet the criteria set forth in propositions 1 through 6, plus the criteria stated in at least four of the remaining propositions 7 through 14.

Basic Characteristics

1. A general education course is broad, introductory, and foundational in its field.
2. A general education course does not presuppose the student's command of highly technical/specialized language, concepts, knowledge, or skills.

What "General" in "General Education Course" Means

3. A general education course is not "specialized education," which prepares students for particular occupations or specific professional responsibilities. It does not focus narrowly on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession.
4. A general education course covers one or more of the ~~traditional~~ [deletion, 10/24/06] subjects typically required of educated persons that form the shared intellectual heritage of our diverse culture.
5. A general education course is general, i.e., not focused upon "majors" or academic and vocational specializations. Its object is "common learning," based upon those realities, experiences, and concerns which all humans share by virtue of their common participation in "the human situation." It seeks the academic and cultural common ground. Its subject matter is part of what all truly educated people have (and ought to have) in common.

Critical Thinking

6. A general education course teaches principles and methods of analytic, critical, and systematic inquiry and reasoning that students then apply to the solution of problems relevant to the discipline being studied, thereby enhancing students' ability to make informed, discriminating, and responsible judgments on the basis of logical and critical analysis and evaluation of ideas, events, and issues.

³This has been college policy since 1986SP. See www.bergen.edu/gened/GEwriting86.pdf.

Intellectual growth

7. A general education course includes instruction that presents forms of expression, fields of knowledge, and methods of inquiry fundamental to intellectual growth and to an understanding of the world and the human condition.

Communication/Literacy

8. A general education course fosters literacy in writing, reading, speaking, and listening.

Technological Literacy

9. A general education course includes learning of technological capabilities appropriate to the discipline being studied.

Information Literacy

10. A general education course fosters forms and levels of information literacy appropriate to the discipline being studied, including the skills and research techniques necessary for effective information access, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and application.

Values

11. A general education course increases a student's consciousness of the important social and ethical concerns of the day.

Integration, Synthesis, Application

12. A general education course enhances a student's ability to integrate, synthesize, and apply in various contexts core knowledge and skills learned in their coursework, not only in the single course but within and across other courses and disciplines.

Citizenship

13. A general education course enhances students' abilities to function as responsible citizens.

Continuing Learning

14. A general education course takes students beyond the acquisition of course-specific knowledge and beyond the immediate application of learning and provides them with opportunities for analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of learning.

4. A course proposed for general education certification at Bergen Community College must address, serve, and support the goals and objectives of the college's general education program, as stated below:

THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE BCC GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

(Approved by the BCC Faculty Senate, February 3, 1998)

From 1991 through 1997, the New Jersey County College Project on General Education developed a set of goals and objectives for the general education programs in the state's two year colleges. The Project published the goals and objectives in 1997, and they were subsequently adopted by all of the institutions represented in the Project, including Bergen Community College.

Goals 1-3 distinguished from Goals 4-10: All general education courses must include learning that supports the first three goals and their respective objectives. Goals 4-10 are more discipline-specific, and thus some of these goals may not be individually applicable to every general education course. The discipline areas most directly connected to each of goals 4-10 are designated in brackets for each of those goals.

A proposal seeking general education certification for a course must show how the course addresses Goals 1-3 and any of Goals 4-10 that may be relevant and must also describe how students will meet the objectives specified for each such goal. (With regard to Goal 3, Ethical Perspective, the Committee will make plausible exceptions for courses in which introducing ethical issues may be inappropriate or impracticable, e.g., mathematics courses, art or music appreciation courses, etc.)

GOAL 1: Communication – Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

Objectives

- 1.1. Students will analyze, comprehend, and evaluate what they read, hear, and see.
- 1.2. Students will state and evaluate the views and findings of others.
- 1.3. Students will write and speak clearly and effectively in standard American English.
- 1.4. Students will logically and persuasively state and support in speech and in writing their points of view or findings.
- 1.5. Students will evaluate, revise, and edit their communications.

GOAL 2: Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Information Processing – Students will use critical thinking and problem solving skills in analyzing information gathered through various media and from a variety of sources.

Objectives

- 2.1. Students will identify a problem and analyze it in terms of its significant parts and in terms of the information needed to solve it.

- 2.2. Students will select and use appropriate sources of information in a variety of formats.
- 2.3. Students will evaluate information on the basis of its origin, viewpoint, relevance, accuracy, and completeness.
- 2.4. Students will recognize weaknesses in arguments such as the use of false or disputable premises, suppression of contrary evidence, faulty reasoning, and emotional loading.
- 2.5. Students will formulate and evaluate possible solutions to problems, and they will defend the solutions they choose to implement.
- 2.6. Students will use computers and other electronic tools to access, analyze, and present information.

GOAL 3: Ethical Perspective – Students will recognize, analyze, and assess ethical issues and situations.

Objectives

- 3.1. Students will identify the ethical implications of an issue or a situation.
- 3.2. Students will analyze and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of differing perspectives on an ethical issue or situation.
- 3.3. Students will take a position on an ethical issue or situation and defend it with logical arguments.

GOAL 4: Quantitative Skills – Students will apply appropriate mathematical and statistical concepts and operations to interpret data and to solve problems. [Mathematics; Natural Sciences; Social Sciences]

Objectives

- 4.1 Students will translate quantifiable problems into mathematical terms and solve these problems using mathematical or statistical operations.
- 4.2 Students will construct graphs and charts, interpret them, and draw appropriate conclusions.

GOAL 5: Science and Technology – Students will develop an understanding of the nature of science and will be able to distinguish science from other fields of study. Students will apply the scientific method of inquiry to draw conclusions based on verifiable evidence; use scientific theories and knowledge to understand the natural world; and explain the impact of scientific theories, discoveries, and technological changes on society. [Natural Sciences; Social Sciences; Philosophy; History]

Objectives

- 5.1 Students will define science and describe its limitations.
- 5.2 Using the scientific method and standard laboratory procedures, students will analyze a problem and draw conclusions from data.
- 5.3 Students will distinguish between scientific theory and scientific discovery and between science and its technological application, and will explain the impact of science and technology on society.

GOAL 6: Society and Human Behavior – Students will use social and behavioral science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions. [Social Sciences; History?]

Objectives

- 6.1 Students will analyze and discuss behavioral or societal issues using theories and concepts from a social or behavioral science.
- 6.2 Students will explain how social institutions and organizations influence individual behavior and how individual behavior influences social institutions and organizations.
- 6.3 Students will describe how social and behavioral scientists gather and analyze data and draw conclusions.

GOAL 7: Aesthetic Perspective – Students will analyze and evaluate works of the literary, visual, or performing arts. [Art; Music; Theatre; Literature; Philosophy]

Objectives

- 7.1. Students will describe commonly used approaches and criteria for analyzing a work of art.
- 7.2. Students will analyze works of art using commonly used approaches and criteria.

(For this goal, Objective 7.1 deals with the "how-to" process for analyzing a work in the literary, visual, or performing arts, while Objective 7.2 involves students in the actual analyzing of particular works of art. In effect, students will use the analytical approaches studied/learned in 7.1 for achieving the 7.2 Objective.)

GOAL 8: Historical Perspective – Students will analyze historical events and movements in western and/or non-western societies and assess their subsequent significance. [History; other Humanities disciplines; Social Sciences; Mathematics? Natural Sciences?]

Objectives

- 8.1 Students will state the causes of a major historical event and analyze the impact of that event on a nation or civilization.
- 8.2 Students will discuss a major idea, movement, invention, or discovery and explain how it affected the world or American society.
- 8.3 Students will show how various interpretations of historical events are influenced by their time, class, culture, and perspective.

GOAL 9: Diversity and Global Perspective – Students will analyze the implications of commonalties and differences among culturally diverse peoples. [Social Sciences; History; other Humanities disciplines; Communications]

Objectives

- 9.1. Students will link cultural practices and perspectives with the geographical and/or historical conditions from which they arose.
- 9.2. Students will explain why an understanding of differences in people's backgrounds is particularly important to American society.

- 9.3. Students will recognize and explain the consequences of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory actions.
- 9.4. Students will recognize the needs and concerns common to culturally diverse peoples.
- 9.5 Students will recognize contributions made by people from various nations and cultures.

GOAL 10: Health and Well-Being – Students will demonstrate how to use the concepts of optimum health and fitness to improve and maintain their well-being. [Wellness & Exercise Science; others?]

Objectives

- 10.1. Students will identify risk factors in lifestyle health issues (e.g., infections, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis) and describe how changing behavior can minimize these risk factors.
- 10.2 Students will analyze an exercise mode relative to its effect on physical and mental well-being.
- 10.3 Students will create a model of a personal plan for alternative ways of using discretionary time that contributes to their well-being.
- 10.4 Students will analyze selected methods that can be used as a personal plan for stress management.

5. A course proposed for general education certification at Bergen Community College must address one or more of the BCC Core Competencies (listed below). (This standard was added per resolution by the General Education Committee on 11/28/06.)

BCC Core Competencies
COMMUNICATION —Students will read, write, speak, and listen effectively.
QUANTITATIVE REASONING —Students will compute accurately, correctly apply mathematical concepts and reasoning, and will correctly interpret, analyze, organize, and display numerical data.
CRITICAL THINKING —Students will actively reflect on, reason about, and form independent judgments on a variety of ideas and information, and use these skills to guide their beliefs and actions.
CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY —Students will demonstrate an awareness of the responsibilities of intelligent citizenship in a diverse and pluralistic society, and will demonstrate cultural, global, and environmental awareness.
TECHNOLOGICAL AND INFORMATION FLUENCY —Students will demonstrate computer fluency, and will be able to retrieve, organize, analyze, and evaluate information using both technological and traditional means.
PERSONAL SKILLS —Students will demonstrate an awareness of ethics, values, and personal responsibility, and an ability to understand and manage themselves and their commitments.
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS —Students will demonstrate an ability to maintain personal and professional relationships, engage in meaningful teamwork, and resolve conflicts.
APPLIED KNOWLEDGE —Students will demonstrate an understanding of, and apply, bodies of knowledge within and across disciplines.
CREATIVITY AND AESTHETIC APPRECIATION —Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the creative process, and an ability to think and express ideas creatively.

The Core Competencies are an outgrowth of the BCC General Education Goals and are intended as guidelines for the development of student learning objectives at the course and program levels. They are consistent with the Middle States Association’s 2002 *Characteristics of Excellence* and the AAUP’s *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*.

6. There is a strong presumption that a course proposed for general education certification at Bergen Community College will be transferable – as a general education course – to a significant number of the four-year colleges/universities to which most BCC transfer-students currently transfer.

The Committee will determine the general education transferability of a course by utilizing the services of the online NJ Transfer articulation system (www.njtransfer.org).

Currently, the top four transfer target institutions for BCC students are (1) Montclair State University, (2) Ramapo College, (3) Rutgers University (Rutgers College, Douglass College, Livingston College, Newark College of Arts & Sciences, University College), and (4) William Paterson University. Significant but lower numbers of BCC students transfer to (5) Fairleigh Dickinson University (Teaneck), (6) the New Jersey City University, and (7) the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

To meet the strong presumption stated above, a course must be transferable – as a general education course –

either (A) to at least three of the following four institutions: (1) Montclair State University, (2) Ramapo College, (3) Rutgers University (one college/campus only), (4) William Paterson University;

or (B) to at least four of the following seven institutions: (1) Montclair State University, (2) Ramapo College, (3) Rutgers University (one college/campus only), (4) William Paterson University, (5) Fairleigh Dickinson University (Teaneck), (6) the New Jersey City University, (7) the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

The Committee is free to consider the certification of a course that fails to meet the aforesaid transferability criteria in the event that, on the basis of clear and convincing evidence and cogent argument, the Committee finds that the course is worthy of such consideration regardless of its low "transfer value." However, the Committee shall exercise this freedom prudently and shall not overturn lightly the strong presumption stated above.