

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.