

Delta General Education Task Force 2020

March 2020

Dear colleagues,

The following documents were prepared by the Delta2GE Task Force whose members are working on designing the details of the new general education framework that was accepted by a majority Senate vote in April 2019.

The “Course Distribution Model” introduces the structure of the general education requirement as well as additional considerations that need to be taken into account.

The section entitled “Proposal for Implementation of Integration Requirement” provides our recommendation of how the “integration” requirement can be fulfilled.

Please remember that this is a draft on which we seek your input. Please email manuela.wagner@uconn.edu and thomas.l.long@uconn.edu with your feedback, comments, concerns, and questions. We want to hear from you!

Below please find the “Topics of Inquiry” as they currently stand. Working groups are in the process of refining these topics. We will share the results as soon as possible.

Topics of Inquiry Model (formerly known as “Content Areas”)

An Undergraduate Foundation for Leadership and Global Citizenship: Breadth and Focus in Six Topics of Inquiry

<i>Science, Theory & Empirical Inquiry</i>	<i>Design, Innovation & Creativity</i>	<i>Individual Values & Social Institutions</i>	<i>Environmental Literacy</i>	<i>Cultural Foundations</i>	<i>Diversity, Inclusion & Social Justice</i>
<p>Courses in this topic help students to understand how scientific theories are constructed and are tested against data collected in the natural world and in social systems. Students will understand knowledge production as an interplay of data, hypotheses, and principles through direct application of the scientific method in the classroom, the lab, or the community.</p>	<p>Design thinking involves developing one or more solutions to a well-defined problem. It represents one form of creativity, which can also involve expression in the form of fine arts or many forms of writing. Courses in this topic require higher-level thought processes that imagine new possibilities. Through the application of imaginative thought and activity, novel ideas, mechanisms, and products are conceived and/or produced.</p>	<p>Informed citizenship and leadership call on an appreciation of how society is organized on multiple scales, from individual values and actions to social institutions and economic systems. Courses in this topic include studies of ethics, epistemology, psychology, social systems, and economics.</p>	<p>The ability to understand, and articulate perspectives on, the interactions between human society and the natural world, as well as the challenges of environmental stewardship.” Courses in this topic examine how human activities and policies impact the natural world, and conversely how the natural world affects human well-being; they also examine how human-environment interactions are represented culturally and artistically.</p>	<p>Human cultures are sets of customs and artistic expressions shaped by history. Courses in this topic promote understanding of a culture through examination of its literary and artistic expressions, its achievements, and its past.</p>	<p>Participating in society means acquiring knowledge and understanding of the world beyond our immediate experience and culture, showing consideration and understanding for human and cultural diversity, and examining our own lives in a global context. These courses present diverse identities and perspectives and critically examine how social dynamics shape a range of life experiences. Students will engage with difference, consider how social agents construct pathways to equity and inclusion, and apply theory to local, national, and/or global contexts.</p>

Students take at least 7 courses, comprising 1 course in each topic (*breadth*) and at least 3 courses in 1 topic (*focus*). Selected courses represent at least 6 subject areas. Scientific Theory & Empirical inquiry topic must include one lab course except for students who have taken a lab course in Biological or Physical Sciences.

Setting aside the one-lab-course and competency requirements, which remain largely unchanged in the new GenEd model, we propose the following Course Distribution Model, a mild refinement of the senate-approved DeltaGE proposal.

Course Distribution Model

Selection Requirements for Students:

Breadth Requirement

Students must take at least one course representing each of the six Topics of Inquiry. Some courses may be designated as fulfilling two Topics and can therefore count for two requirements.

Focus Requirement

Students must take at least three GenEd courses in a Focus Area. Topics of Inquiry are by default eligible to serve as a Focus Area, but other Focus Areas may be proposed by a group of faculty and approved by GEOC to fulfill this requirement.

Minimum Credits Requirement

Students must take at least 21 credits of GenEd courses, by definition those that have been designated as fulfilling the specific learning objectives of at least one Topic of Inquiry.

Minimum Number of Subject Areas Requirement

Students must take GenEd courses in at least 6 subject areas as determined by subject-area code. A cross-listed course is counted according to the single subject-area code listed on the student's transcript.

Integrative Experience Requirement

Students must take an approved Integrative Experience course. This could be a GenEd course, in which case it would count towards the Breadth requirement, Focus requirement, and the Minimum Credit requirement. Alternatively, some

courses may be designated as fulfilling the Integrative Experience but not be designated as GenEd; this leaves open the possibility of an upper-level course in the major where appropriate, similar to the current practice of writing in the major.

Note on total credits for GenEd courses:

FAQ: If a student takes a set of courses such that each course only fulfills one Topic of Inquiry, could it require the student to take eight (3-credit) courses, not seven?

Yes. This was considered in the original DeltaGE proposal, that a student taking only single-designated courses might have to take eight 3-credit courses to satisfy all requirements. This is consistent with the status quo and is therefore deemed acceptable. (The current GenEd requirements require exactly this, eight courses if none are double-designated.) In contrast to the status quo, in the new proposal, a student could take many double-designated courses which actually makes the fulfillment of requirements easier, resulting in more freedom in the choices of classes later. For example, if a student finds three courses that each cover two Topics, with no Topic repeated among these three, then she has already fulfilled her Breadth requirement and therefore has a lot of freedom in choosing her remaining four courses needed to satisfy the 21 total credits required. This freedom is recognized as a positive side effect of double-designated courses, which we value and intend to encourage.

Note that currently, approximately 40% of GenEd courses fulfill two content areas. If under the new plan there is a 40% chance that any particular course drawn at random is double-designated, then there is less than a 3% chance that seven courses drawn at random will not include a double-designated course. Thus, we expect that a vast majority of students will be able to complete GenEds in just seven courses.

GEOC rules for faculty proposing GenEd Courses and Focus Areas:

- No course may be designated as fulfilling the required learning objectives of more than two Topics of Inquiry.
- Topic of Inquiry learning objectives do not necessarily exclude the fulfillment of competency, integrative experience, laboratory, or second-language requirements. A course can potentially fulfill these latter learning objectives in addition to Topic of Inquiry objectives, though GEOC has the discretion to deny a designation on the basis that a course is attempting to fulfill too many objectives at once.

- New interdisciplinary Focus Areas (beyond the automatic designation of Topics of Inquiry as Focus Areas) may be proposed by faculty from at least two departments to be approved by GEOC by catalog year. A Focus Area will consist of a structured plan resulting in three 3-credit GenEd courses, and that form a coherent, meaningful theme. A structured plan may say, for example, one course from list A, one course from list B, etc., or may say, take exactly these three courses, etc. As long as the result is three courses and multiple departments represented, the structured plan is deemed valid.

Proposed New Policy for Efficient GenEd roll out:

Decouple GenEd requirements from the catalog year of the major requirements and school/college requirements, at least for the first few years of the roll out of new GenEd requirements. This will solve the following problem. A student joins UConn in 2022 as an ACES freshman, working on GenEd requirements under the current model. Our new GenEd model becomes active in 2023. Under current policy (without this proposed change), if she were to join the School of Business in Spring 2024, she would join the new catalog in its entirety, and have to satisfy the GenEd requirements of the new catalog, even if she had fully completed the older GenEd format from her time of entry. This proposal would allow her to instead stay on the 2022 requirements (for GenEds only). Similar measures were taken for the transitional years at peer and aspirant institutes studied by the previous committee.

**Proposal for Implementation of the Integration Requirement
Delta GenEd2 Task Force**

Background: In its report to the University of Connecticut Senate, the original GenEd Task Force outlined a proposed model for a new general education curriculum. This included the recommendation for an integrative experience, equivalent to at least one that would highlight connections within and among disciplines.

There is an opportunity for the Provost to enhance cross-college collaboration and teaching by soliciting new course development that provides an integrative experience in topical areas of interest that stem out of the Focus areas for general education or that meaningfully explore the roles that students play in leadership positions or active participation in e.g. a student club. It is also an opportunity to increase the number of problem-based/service learning courses that likely go hand in hand with the goals of the Life- Transformative Education Task Force.

Definition of Integration: Students will participate in an integrative experience that fosters synthesis of knowledge from a variety of disciplines in curricular and/or co-curricular/extracurricular activities. The integrative experience promotes thinking within or across disciplines to generate original ideas and to find new ways of perception and expression. The goal is to develop capacity and reinforce students' abilities to produce new knowledge and make connections that promote innovation and problem-solving in societal and industrial practices.

Criteria: Courses/Activities will be deemed sufficient to meet the Integration requirement if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Integrate knowledge across multiple courses and experiences
- Transfer learning to evaluate multiple solutions or multiple perspectives
- Include reflection on how their learning has evolved and developed
- Apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes to solve problems in real life

Oversight: Oversight will be provided by the General Education Oversight Committee (GEOC) which will be responsible for:

- setting the criteria for approving all course proposals for the Integration requirement;
- reviewing and approving courses or activities proposed by departments for inclusion in the Integration requirement;
- monitoring periodically courses that satisfy the Integration requirement to ensure that they continue to meet the criteria adopted by the Senate;

Implementation: Programs might determine the required integrative experience(s) for their student majors, provided that it meets the general criteria above. Importantly, there are three potential pathways by which a student could achieve this General Education requirement, within their major's curriculum, through co-curricular/extracurricular means, or via an individualized experience (or even some combination of these).

The DeltaGE2 Committee believes that each major, and its students, would benefit by providing at least one curricular option, a course at the 3000-level or above, which would meet the Integration criteria. Co-curricular/extracurricular opportunities would be vetted/approved by the department and included in plans of study. Co-curricular/extracurricular

options should be considered to meet the work/time commitment equivalent to a 3-credit course but codified as a 0-credit experience that would allow listing on the transcript. The individualized option would benefit those students that would like a more direct role in developing this educational experience, and those departments where courses in the major do not readily lend themselves to meeting Integration.

It is recognized that the Integration requirement lends itself to adoption by some majors more readily than others. Examples of integrative experiences that we are currently aware of that could meet this General Education requirement follow below. We acknowledge that there are additional potential ways that departments could conceive for their students to meet this requirement and encourage creative approaches for GEOC consideration.

Curricular

- Capstone courses (e.g., Senior Design Experience in Engineering; Senior Project in Art; Fine Arts)
- A sequence of courses, already required by the major, which when taken together meet the criteria
- Undergraduate research
- Independent study experiences
- Internships
- Service-learning tied to credit-bearing course(s)
- Study abroad and domestic away programs, with a faculty member approved reflection requirement¹

Co-curricular/extracurricular (with a faculty or staff approved reflection requirement)

- Service-learning not tied to a credit-bearing course(s)
- Community outreach projects (<https://communityoutreach.uconn.edu/>)
- Leadership experiences
- Internship not tied to a credit-bearing course

Individualized

- This option would be developed between a student and a faculty member and would require a creativity contract approved by the Program Director. It could include converting an existing course to an Integrative experience in the same manner that Honors conversions occur.

¹ Reflection requirements could include periodic reflection papers, journal entries, or open discussions, among other options.

Learning Goal:

Students will be able to describe their integrative experience as such and describe the knowledge base/training that permitted them to solve a problem, achieve an outcome, given the more diverse perspective they developed.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to translate reflection experienced through the integrative exercise and apply it to future problems/assignments.

Respectfully submitted,

Delta 2GE Task Force