

General Education Program Guidelines

Mission & Goals

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Mission

The mission of the General Education Program is to promote learning that is central to the intellectual pursuits associated with our educational programs and to enable students to make informed choices about matters of public and personal significance in a diverse, democratic society and global community. Our program helps students to become informed, independent thinkers by developing competencies in communication, quantitative analysis, and critical thinking and by helping them understand and appreciate the diversity of culture, individuals, the natural environment, and the global society.

Goals of General Education

After completing the General Education Program at ECU, students will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively by applying skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening and through appropriate use of information technology.
2. Use appropriate methods of critical thinking and quantitative reasoning to examine issues and to identify solutions.
3. Analyze the historical and social contexts of cultural, economic, political, religious, and scientific developments.
4. Analyze the social and behavioral influences that explain how people relate to each other, to institutions, and to communities.
5. Analyze the fundamental natural processes of the world and the interactions of humans and their environment.
6. Analyze the values, cultural context, and aesthetic qualities of artistic, literary, philosophic, and/or religious works.
7. Distinguish the methods that underlie the search for knowledge in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, history, and social and behavioral sciences.
8. Integrate knowledge that will deepen their understanding of, and will inform their own choices about, issues of personal and public importance.

Goals one, two, seven, and eight will be addressed across the general education curriculum as described in the remainder of this document. Effective communication through the appropriate use of technology will initially be developed in a coherent block of courses designed to build skills in written and oral communication. However, all other courses in the general education program should provide opportunities to further develop effective communication skills. Critical thinking skills will be developed across the entire general education curriculum, while quantitative reasoning will initially be developed in a required mathematics course and then incorporated into other appropriate courses in the program. The methods of searching for knowledge will be examined through required courses in the arts, humanities, history, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences. Finally, the ability to integrate knowledge is an important critical thinking skill that refers not only to the integration of knowledge within one discipline, but also to the integration of knowledge across disciplines. All general education courses are expected to help students integrate knowledge within one discipline. Integration of knowledge across disciplines is also expected in those courses where meaningful opportunities can be exploited.

The eight goals of general education will be assessed on a regular basis through a faculty-defined embedded course assessment that is described in a separate document.

EKU's Institutional Goals and General Education

The General Education Program is an integral part of all undergraduate programs at Eastern Kentucky University. The program as a whole, as well as its constituent courses, must address the institution's goals relating to educational programs. The General Education Program is designed to provide a coherent foundation of skills and knowledge for each undergraduate program, and, therefore, relates directly to EKU's Goal three, to promote learning through high quality programs and services and to Goal four, to provide intellectual and cultural opportunities which will develop and enhance scholarship and intellectual curiosity.

In addition, the General Education provides excellent opportunities to address Goal one, to promote and support a climate that respects and celebrates diversity. The mission of the General Education Program states that the program "enables students to make informed choices about matters of public and personal significance in a diverse, democratic society and global community." People continually interact with diverse people as a result of differences in race, social class, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion, and national origin. Students must therefore learn to analyze and address problems from diverse perspectives and to appreciate the opportunities associated with interacting with different people.

To achieve this mission, faculty can serve as role models to demonstrate how problems are examined in a diverse society and global community. Faculty can illustrate how an informed, independent thinker examines problems from different

perspectives, identifies the underlying values, strengths, weaknesses, and likely results associated with different perspectives, and makes decisions that are respectful of different perspectives. They can also encourage students to engage in civil discourse within the classroom.

The General Education Committee believes that diversity should be examined across the entire general education curriculum. However, within the program diversity is more explicitly addressed in several areas. The oral communication learning objectives require students to demonstrate an other-oriented perspective. The learning objectives for arts and humanities require students to analyze the cultural values and ethical issues expressed in creative works from different cultures. In history the learning objectives require students to demonstrate an understanding of the interactions of social, cultural, political, religious, economic, scientific and/or technological developments as factors in historical change. Furthermore, the goal for social and behavioral sciences requires that students analyze the social and behavioral influences that explain how people relate to each other, to institutions, and to communities.