# General Education Committee Annual Report, 2017-1018

## Committee members

James Randall, Music (2019) Chair  
Liz Ametsbichler, MCLL (2018)  
Paul Muench, Philosophy (2018)  
Travis Wheeler, Computer Science (2019)  
Susan Bradford, MC Applied Arts & Science (2020)   
Brad Clough, Liberal Studies (2019)  
Greg Peters, Missoula College (2019)  
Anna Sala, DBS (2020)  
Jaci Wilkinson, Mansfield Library (2020)

Student Members  
Bailey Durnell (Spring)  
Daniel Parson (Spring)  
Taylor Gregory

### Ex-officio Member

Associate Provost Nathan Lindsay  
Brian French, Executive Director Student Success  
Mary Opitz, Admissions Evaluator

## Responsibilities outlined in the Faculty Senate Bylaws

The primary responsibility of the General Education Committee is ongoing evaluation and assessment of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the general education requirements and criteria. The General Education Committee acts as an advocate for general education, proposes revisions to its requirements and criteria, reviews proposals, and ensures that all general education requirements are feasible within campus constraints, Board of Regents policies, and legislative actions.

## General Education Course Review

* In the fall the Committee reviewed and approved 11 new general education courses, 1 designation removed, and 2 language exemptions. The rolling review was again postponed due to APASP and program prioritization. Two courses were submitted for general education designations in the spring. Both were approved as well as a course pending follow-up from the spring. The instructor of one of the courses submitted in the fall decided not to pursue the general education designation at this time.
* The two professors whose general education designations were appealed and denied last year appealed the decision to ASCRC. Chair Randall met with the ASCRC Chair and professor of ANTY 326 to discuss the appeal. He also met with Professor Eglin (last year’s ASCRC Chair) to go over the appeal for HSTR 272. The Committee sent the following memorandum to ASCRC.

"Memorandum to ASCRC regarding Appeal of ANTY 326 and HSTR 272

The General Education Committee affirms its earlier decisions to deny ANTY 326 and HSTR 272 an Ethics designation based on the evidence provided at that time. Both courses were granted a one-year grace period during which there was ample opportunity to revise the application and provide evidence for the E designation. We recognize that there have been recent revisions to these courses which signal progress in the right direction, but the time has passed procedurally for us to continue to review revisions. We encourage the professors of both courses to reapply for an Ethics designation in Fall of 2018."

In our discussion, it also became apparent that the appeals process should be more clearly articulated in policy and procedure. The committee has prioritized a review of this process and will propose revisions to the current policy. We look forward to working with ASCRC in this regard.  

ASCRC overturned the Committee’s decision. The Committee asked the Chair to respond to ECOS out of concern that ASCRC overturning the General Education Committees’ decision would set a bad precedent. Ultimately the issue was debated at the Senate and the courses were allowed to retain the designation. Procedures (see Policy 202.4.1 and 201.30.4 below) were updated to prevent this type of situation happening in the future.

Policy and Procedure Items

* The following procedures were updated and approved at the December Faculty Senate meeting.
* [202.10 General Education Framework](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/documents/FSDocs17-18/202.10_GenEdFramework12-9-17.docx)
* [202.20 General Education Criteria](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/documents/FSDocs17-18/202.20_GenEdCriteria12-9-17.docx)
* [202.40 General Education Review and Assessment](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/documents/FSDocs17-18/202.40_GenEdReview_revised.docx)
* [Policy 202.4.1 General Education Subcommittee](https://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/documents/FSDocs17-18/GenEdSubcommitteeResponsibilities202.4.1Revised.docx) Responsibilities was updated and revised. Link to final
* A Template for GE course review feedback was created (appended below).
* FAQs were drafted to address common issues that come up during review (appended below).
* The Committee briefly discussed the proposed Appeal Policy and requested clarification from ECOS.
* The Committee reviewed and approved the proposed revisions to the [Policy 201.30.4 Requesting Reconsideration of a Rejected Curriculum Proposal](https://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/documents/FSDocs17-18/201-30.-4_ReconsiderationRevised-4-12-18.docx).
* The catalog listings for the revised X and Y categories was updated to include “formerly, with the old titles” to avoid confusion of students trying to find courses when using earlier catalogs for graduation. Although the learning outcomes have changed, the courses have not been reviewed.
* It was agreed that BOX will be used to store General Education forms for assessment purposes. Revised forms will need to be uploaded so samples are available for the accreditation report. The Committee may look into using a rubric to summarize the rolling review information for tracking purposes.   
  + MLIB, *Research Skills for an informed Citizenry* was identified as a good example for Group Y. However, it will no longer be offered.

## Other Business / Discussion Items

### WICHE Passport project

The Committee was provided with the WICHE Passport Mapping Project Report. UM participated in the mapping project, but has yet to consider membership in the Passport that is still in the developmental stage.

MC Students enrolling in Japanese  
Professor Tuck met with the Committee to discuss concerns regarding Missoula College students enrolling in first-year Japanese and performing poorly. The students are routinely waived into the class by advisors. He has five Missoula College students in his class this semester. The issue is puzzling given that Missoula College students are not required to take a language. This is not an issue for other first-year language courses. The Committee suggested further review of the data to determine whether the students were in the same program at Missoula College. Director French reached out to the Missoula College Advising Staff.  
  
Data Analysis of current general education statistics  
A Workgroup was assigned to analyze enrollment data from Banner. The data could help address the following question: 1) distribution of GE courses across departments; 2) most popular courses within the GE groups; and 3) any recommendations based on the findings. In the future the Committee may consider attrition and completion rates in general education courses. It would be interesting to know why students take courses. The report was discussed at the May 2nd meeting. …  
  
Possibility of additional computer programming/data analytics requirement  
The committee recognizes the importance of computer and data literacy to our students. The Committee discussed the various options to include another requirement within GE and proposed a change to one of the natural science options to include computer science courses as a short-term solution given ongoing discussions to restructure general education. The [proposal](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/documents/FSDocs17-18/GenEd-computing-proposal-5-3-18.docx) was approved by ASCRC and will be considered by the Faculty Senate early in the fall.   
  
Other General Education Models

Doug Coffin, ASCRC Chair joined the Committee to discuss an idea for restructuring general education for innovation and enrichment. A PowerPoint slide was shared that listed five areas for innovation: Creativity, Research, Skills, Analytics, and Communication. The slide also identified five competencies: Math, Writing, Applied Science, Anthropology, and Applied Computing/ Technology. The innovation areas would allow students to create their own pathway through general education by bundling classes to complete a project in an innovation area.  
  
Consideration of President’s Recommendations including the UPC’s Montana Ways  
The Committee discussed the Montana Ways recommendation and prepared a response (appended below.) It requested that its student member ask ASUM to provide feedback. Several students attended the May 2nd meeting to provide input.

## Appendix

### Template for Communication to Instructors

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ,

As Chair of the General Education sub-committee that reviews courses seeking approval for the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ designation, I write to inform you that as your proposal for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ stands now, we cannot yet grant approval. Below I will outline in detail the reason(s) your course proposal was not granted approval.

1. <Reason #1 Summary >
   1. <Description of reason>
   2. <Quote from submitted materials>
   3. <Quote from 202.20 General Education Course Criteria and Learning Outcomes.> You can find the full text of this documentation on the  [Faculty Senate procedures page in procedure 202.20 under the General Education heading.](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/procedures/)
2. <Reason #2 Summary>
   1. <Description of reason>
   2. <Quote from submitted materials>
   3. <Quote from 202.20 General Education Course Criteria and Learning Outcomes. You can find the full text of this documentation on the  [Faculty Senate procedures page in procedure 202.20 under the General Education heading.](http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/procedures/)

We encourage you to modify your proposal accordingly and resubmit within the next two weeks on \_\_\_\_(date)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We would be happy to be of further assistance in this process so please do not hesitate to email me if you seek further clarifying guidance.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## General Education Committee Feedback (4/26/18) UPC Strategies for Distinction: I. An Innovative Core: Montana Ways

INTRODUCTION

The GE committee is committed to improving our current system. In our opinion, new GE/Core proposals should work to address or remedy perceived issues with our current system.

Commonly heard criticisms of GE at UM (these aren’t universally held, and some have more merit than others):

1. Too complicated: 11 groups (makes advising complex; doesn’t help with retention)
2. Too much overlap between groups (although steps to remedy this have been taken in recent years)
3. Our GE doesn't align perfectly with other systems (MUS CORE, WICHE Interstate Passport, Peer Institutions), which may present a barrier to students transferring to UM
4. Too competitive: for a variety of reasons, schools and department may scramble to keep GE credits within the department—SCHs, attracting TAs to teach GE, etc. With lower enrollment at UM (and a wide variety of GE choices), the issue is exacerbated.
5. Our GE doesn’t always allow for the flexibility desired by a variety of programs: GLI, Honors College, Professional degrees, etc.

Priorities for new GE Revisions (not everyone is in agreement here, but there’s a certain energy toward the following points)

1. A simpler plan: fewer GE groups; or, perhaps we retain our current GE groups within larger categories and allow flexibility in distribution of required credits within those categories
2. Ease of assessment: learning outcomes for groups should be assessable through qualitative or quantitative methods. This is important for university accreditation.
3. Our GE shouldn’t be so unique that it presents a barrier for students transferring to UM
4. Flexibility to serve diverse student needs:
   1. Students wanting a more “curated” approach (desired by some professional schools, and programs like GLI or Honors College)
   2. Those students who aren’t yet decided on their path and want the ease of a check-the-box system
   3. Transfer students

MONTANA WAYS VS. OUR CURRENT GE SYSTEM

Pros

1. Fewer categories: 4 vs. 11, which could allow for greater flexibility
2. Some GE members see potential benefit in using the Montana Ways as a “branding exercise” to communicate shared values at UM
3. Our current GE groups fit reasonably well into the 4 Ways (see table below). However, there are distribution issues to be considered.

Cons

1. Some GE members see “Montana Ways” as too insular and feel strongly that it communicates the wrong message, emphasizing local identity over global engagement. Out-of-state and international students may be less attracted to this message than in-state students.
2. Doesn’t make assessment easier. While our current system has many groups, each one now has a clear and limited number of outcomes, which makes assessment easier. (This was viewed favorably in our last accreditation visit)
3. Greater overlap and “fuzziness” between categories than our current system
4. Transferability: it’s so unique that it aligns less easily with peer institutions than our current GE (which may be a barrier for students transferring in). The UPC has recognized that this is something for consideration.
5. The proposed interdisciplinary courses that serve particular degrees or programs could create problems for students changing majors at UM. If a student changes a major, would another interdisciplinary track need to be satisfied?

SUMMARY/PATH FORWARD

* Although “Montana Ways” could offer a distinctive way of branding UM values it also carries considerable risk. The university should work with experienced advertising and marketing professionals to make that final determination. Could a generic label of “UM Core” work just as well?
* If the “Ways” categories were adopted as a framework for a new UM Core, our current GE groups could fit within it (see table below); however, for the reasons outlined above (under Cons), we would suggest retaining a more conventional set of GE subcategories. Our current GE groups are a good starting point, as they better align with GE models at peer institutions than “Montana Ways,” and we already have clear and assessable learning outcomes for each group, which is important for accreditation.

**MONTANA WAYS/CURRENT GE GROUPS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| COMMUNICATING | CREATING | KNOWING | LIVING |
| III: Modern and Classical Languages | IV: Expressive Arts | II: Mathematics | VIII: Ethics and Human Values |
| I: Writing | V: Literary and Artistic Studies | VI: Historical Studies | X: Cultural and International Diversity |
|  |  | VII: Social Sciences | IX: Democracy and Citizenship |
|  |  | XI: Natural Science |  |

**General Education FAQs (05/02/18)**

**1) My GE course is coming up for rolling review. Do my answers have to reflect the course as I’m currently teaching it, or can I adjust my answers and assessment materials to better address the current learning outcomes?**

You can and should tailor your answers and assessment materials to the current general education learning outcomes. Because our goal for rolling review is to help instructors meet the currently approved learning outcomes, we fully expect instructors to make modifications to their courses to ensure that they meet the current criteria.

**2) Why aren’t students’ passing grades on exams and quizzes sufficient evidence for assessment?**

While individual student grades on exams and quizzes may be helpful assessments for you as an instructor, the general education committee is specifically interested in how the learning outcomes for our general education groups are being met. To gather that data, we need evidence drawn from specific assignment or essay prompts, exam questions, and similar materials that are directly tied to the learning outcomes. These materials need not be extensive, but they will assure the committee that we are holding students accountable for course outcomes. Collecting data for assessment is also important for university accreditation.

**3) I haven’t yet taught the course I’m proposing, so how do I provide assessment data?**

Only the first portion of the assessment section is due with a new course proposal. For that section, you might create a prompt for a homework assignment, essay, or provide specific exam questions that test the specific learning outcomes for your general education group. You’ll provide information for the remaining portions of the assessment section within a year of having completed the first offering of the class.

**4) Can I have my own Learning Outcomes in addition to the Learning Outcomes for the GE designation?**

Yes, in fact, most courses do.

**5) My course was approved for GenEd designation during the last rolling review and little has changed in the requirements. Do I need to completely rewrite my proposal? Can I resubmit content from last time with a few updates?**

It’s likely that much of your content will remain the same. However, because assessment is now a part of rolling review, you’ll want to allot sufficient time to give those new portions careful consideration.

**6) How do I submit an accurately representative proposal for a course taught by multiple instructors who use slightly different syllabi and assessment techniques?**

In the case of coordinated courses with multiple sections and instructors, we normally encourage the department chair or lead instructor to submit a single form for review.  If GE assessment strategies vary by section, the submission should enumerate these variations and provide assessment samples for each distinct approach.

**7)** **The GE form suggests that GE courses are “normally” offered with few prerequisites, for three credits, and below the 400-level. Is my proposal more likely to be rejected if it does not abide by these guidelines? What are acceptable justifications for exceptions to these normal GE designations?**

Your proposal will be subjected to greater scrutiny if it does not meet those guidelines. Justifications for exceptions are considered on a case-by-case basis and should explain (a) why the course does not fit the normal guidelines, and (b) how it qualifies as “introductory and foundational within the offering department or within the General Education Group.”

**8) How do I know who must submit a proposal? Should it always be the professor? Department chair?**

An instructor or department chair may submit a proposal; however, if a department chair submits, they should closely collaborate with the instructor to ensure the course is delivered as proposed and that sample syllabi and assessment materials accurately reflect the content of the course.

**9) My course has been a standard, commonly used GE course at UM for decades. Why do I need to submit paperwork for its renewal?**

The criteria for nearly all of our GE categories have changed over time, some to a greater degree than others. Rolling review of all courses ensures that we are meeting the current Learning Outcomes determined by faculty governance. Also, because we’ve now added assessment to the rolling review process, we need new data from your courses.

**10) How lengthy and detailed should my responses be? Does review respond positively to concise, bullet-points or extensive prose?**

Responses should be sufficient in length and detail to address each question. The committee does not have a preference for a specific format.

**11) What happens if my proposal is rejected?**

You will receive timely feedback if the review subcommittee determines that your course proposal fails to meet the GE learning outcomes. You’ll then have the opportunity to revise your course based on that feedback. If the revised version of your course is rejected, you have the right to appeal this decision to ASCRC.

**12) What are the most common reasons that a GE designation is denied?**

In recent years, the most common reason for denial is a lack of evidence showing that the course is focused on the learning outcomes for the GE perspective. In many cases, the simple remedy is make sure that your justifications for meeting the learning outcomes on the form are directly tied to evidence on your sample syllabus (readings, lecture topics, etc.) and evidence in your assessment materials: essay and homework prompts; exam questions; etc.

**13) Where can I see an example of a successful, approved GE proposal in my group?**

Sample forms from approved courses are posted on the Faculty Senate website.  We do not yet have assessment samples in place for every GE group, but encourage you to review several samples to see a range of acceptable options.

**14) How can I get help with my GE proposal if I still have questions? Is there someone to whom I can send a draft proposal for feedback before the deadline?**

You may contact the chair of the GE committee for assistance. The chair may offer feedback, or direct your inquiry to a person on the committee with expertise in the GE perspective you are seeking. In advance of rolling review and new course proposal deadlines, the GE Committee also opens up a meeting time so that you can ask questions and get feedback on your proposal. These times will be announced via campus email.

**15) If the same class is offered through more than one campus or department, do they all need to submit a proposal for review?**

If a similarly-numbered course is offered independently by multiple departments or colleges, each unit should submit its version of the course for independent review.  However, if a course is offered by the same department or instructor on multiple campuses, one form is sufficient.