

General Education Reform Proposal – Themes of Feedback and Response

This document summarizes the key points of feedback received thus far by the General Education Committee regarding the reform proposal shared with campus, as well as the Committee's response. If you wish to share feedback, please contact your [college representative](#).

Feedback Theme #1: Insufficient focus on diversity: There has been feedback from multiple departments and committees, most heavily represented by the Arts and Sciences, with strong objections to reducing the number of diversity requirements within the general education curriculum. Specifically, feedback encouraged the committee to retain both a U.S. and Global Diversity requirement as these are felt to be crucial components of a college education, essential to the workforce into which our students will emerge, and are important to creating a welcoming campus environment for faculty, staff, and students.

Response: Based on feedback from campus, the General Education Committee supports retaining both the U.S. and Global Diversity requirements in the Phase 1 general education reform proposal. Students will be required to complete one single attribute diversity course (either U.S. or Global). The second diversity course must satisfy the other diversity requirement and can satisfy another category in general education (Humanities/Fine Arts or Social Science). All other Humanities/Fine Arts and Social Science credits completed by students for general education must have a single distribution attribute. Phase II and III will explore whether to continue allowing any "double-dipping" of diversity with other general education requirements.

Revised structure to include US and Global Diversity requirement in Phase 1

1. Fundamental Skills
 - a. Composition (6 credits)
 - b. Public Speaking (3 credits)
 - c. Quantitative Literacy (3 credits)
2. Distribution (*Note: One completed Humanities/Fine Arts or Social Science Course can include a Gen Ed Diversity attribute in the opposite category as completed in section 3 below. All other Humanities/Fine Arts or Social Science credits must have a single distribution attribute.*)
 - a. Humanities/Fine Arts (6 credits from two disciplines)
 - b. Social Sciences (6 Credits from two disciplines)
 - c. Natural/Physical Science (3 or 4 credits)
3. Diversity
 - a. Single attribute diversity course (U.S. or Global)

Feedback Theme #2: Why 30-31 hours and why a phased approach? There was feedback from different parts of campus questioning the decision to reduce to 30-31 hours, with others wondering why a phased approach is being used.

Response to why 30-31 hours: There are several factors that resulted in a recommendation of 30-31 hours of prescribed general education requirements. Reducing general education requirements to 30-31 hours creates approximately 15-16 hours of new elective hours in plans of study which will

increase flexibility for students to complete necessary prerequisites or complete other courses of personal or professional interest. Moreover, a smaller general education program will allow students to pursue minors or double majors which will increase the job market opportunities of our students. This increases the potential earnings of our graduates and serves the needs of employers in the metropolitan region.

The lack of flexibility in existing plans, caused in part by a 46-hour general education requirement, has unintentionally resulted in a general education curriculum that lacks coherence and focus owing to the need for many general education courses to count towards specific major requirements to fit within 120-hour degree plans. This dilutes the ability to create a general education curriculum that deliberately introduces students to the liberal arts and sciences in ways focused by engagement with big questions and the distinctive strengths of our institution.

The existing credit hour requirement is also on the high side of our Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan University (CUMU) peers and well above the norm of 30-31 at our University of Nebraska system partners at UNK and UNL. Additionally, increased flexibility afforded by reducing prescribed general education requirements will enable transfer students to apply credits more effectively in meaningful ways towards their degree, while potentially making UNO a more attractive transfer destination for students as they compare options in/around the region. Ultimately, the Committee feels that reducing prescribed requirements to increase flexibility in degree plans will make it more likely that students will be able to graduate with fewer excess credits and lower debt, while also providing an opportunity to increase the coherence and relevance of general education by reconsidering general education requirements and the types of courses that satisfy this part of the curriculum.

Response to *why a phased approach*: The basic structure being proposed in phase 1 of reform is very similar to the existing model, with reductions in credit hours evenly distributed across each category. The similarity of the phase 1 model with our existing approach should minimize disruption for faculty, students, and staff yet still achieve significant immediate benefits for students by introducing more flexibility through increased electives in their plans of study. Campus is currently tooled and structured to teach our existing set of general education courses. To implement new general education course requirements, a new structure, and new credit count at the same time would potentially be highly disruptive to campus. The General Education Committee feels that taking moderate action by first reducing the credit hour requirement will produce immediate benefits for students, minimize campus disruption, and provide additional time to consider substantive changes in phases 2 and 3.

Feedback Theme #3: What's next? What will Phases 2 and 3 of the reform process look like? There have been questions about the focus of phases 2 and 3 of reform and what considerations will drive this part of the reform process. Though identified as distinctive phases, the General Education Committee envisions these as closely linked phases that have significant overlap.

Response: Phase 2 will focus on creating general education course outcomes and expectations aligned with the broad principles of a liberal education articulated by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and highlighted below. General education courses should be for everyone, not focused narrowly on students in particular academic majors. The Committee will engage broadly with faculty, staff, and students to consider how to translate the AAC&U principles

below into specific outcomes and course expectations. These outcomes and expectations will constitute the parameters for evaluating whether courses should be included in UNO's updated General Education curriculum.

- AAC&U Principles of a Liberal Education
 - Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural worlds – focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring.
 - Intellectual and practical skills – practiced extensively
 - Personal and social responsibility – anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges.
 - Integrative and applied learning – demonstrated through the application of knowledge and skills to new settings and complex problems.

Phase 3 will address how to operationalize the outcomes and expectations developed in phase 2 into a new general education model and specific set of requirements. This phase will also involve broad faculty, staff, and student engagement. Questions to be considered as part of phase 3 include, but are not limited to:

- What specific requirements should be established to reflect the outcomes/expectations identified in phase 2?
- What is the appropriate weight given to the AAC&U principles in different parts of general education?
- Can/should courses be sequenced in particular ways?
- Can/should more upper division courses satisfy general education outcomes/expectations?
- Can/should experiential learning be deliberately incorporated in a new general education model to satisfy outcomes/expectations?
- Can/should general education courses be assessed differently than the current system?
- Can/should general education courses be for inclusion in general education on a regular basis?
- Can general education courses have prerequisites?
- Can general education courses double-count for requirements in academic majors?
- Can general education courses continue to count for multiple requirements (e.g. diversity and social science)?