

General Education Guidelines

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Each new or revised baccalaureate program submitted for consideration to the University Curriculum Committee should also include a brief report on how the program fulfills the university's General Education Goals. Ordinarily, this will include a brief narrative discussion, followed by a chart that shows how the goals are met. Each program should meet the following base requirements on its way toward a total of 42 credits devoted to General Education.

A core of courses and categories of courses taken by all PNC students (27 credits)

Composition & 9 credits

Communication

Natural Sciences 6 credits minimum

or Technology

Quantitative 6 credits | Students must take at least 3 credits of college-level math (above Math 111 or its reasoning equivalent); a course in statistics, economics, information technology, or an additional math course fills out the requirement.

Humanities & 6 credits minimum | Courses in both humanities and social sciences are encouraged.
Social Sciences

A maximum of 12 credits can be counted toward General Education within any major, in most cases.

Beyond the 27 credits of core courses, programs can fulfill General Education Goals with additional distribution or course requirements, or through such high-impact educational practices as the following: a First-Year Experience course, student-faculty research, service learning and community-based learning, internships, study abroad, and senior capstone courses and projects.

Background

While our new Strategic Plan has committed PNC to expanding its undergraduate program offerings, there are at present no guidelines for how new programs can show that they meet the university's General Education Goals, as they appear on page 7 of the 2008-09 General Catalog.

This document seeks to provide guidance for new programs and revisions to existing programs, consistent with PNC's Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, and General Education Goals, as well as the Higher Learning Commission's accreditation requirements, their Statement on General Education, and the most effective educational practices as they have been identified by the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

The twenty-first century economy is not for the faint of heart, and it requires that workers be flexible and adaptable; studies have shown that current college students can expect to change careers many times over the course of their lives.¹ This is not to downplay the major, or the ways that majors can open up specific career paths. But the skills that a good university general education program gives students—excellent writing and oral presentation ability, critical thinking and problem solving, leadership and teamwork skills, a global view, and the ability to connect local to global issues—these are the skills that students will use over and over again throughout their lives, and which will allow them to adapt and advance and continue to find places where they are valued. The importance of these skills has been established through surveys of employers, and is a prominent requirement of the Higher Learning Commission for university accreditation.²

PNC has a wide array of degree programs, from majors in the traditional liberal arts that allow a great deal of flexibility in terms of undergraduate coursework, to professional programs that demand an array of courses in a specific sequence to meet program goals. Faced with this landscape, it is clear the general education goals are going to be met differently in different programs. However, PNC is committed to achieving general education goals for all students, and therefore it is important that we work toward a common understanding of those goals and the diverse ways they can be achieved.

Creating Flexible and Effective Program Guidelines

This document is also intended specifically to modify the General Education “Footprint” adopted by the Faculty Senate in the fall of 2007 (document 07-08), which requires a total of 42 credit hours to be reserved for General Education by all degree programs at PNC. However, the definition of General Education set out there can be construed as too narrow to accommodate existing programs and planned future programs.

Clearly, different programs achieve general education goals in different ways. The BS in Mechanical Engineering, for example, incorporates General Education Goals into a number of major courses, including two 5-credit first-year courses, and a capstone Engineering Design Experience. Likewise, it seems fair to allow a certain amount of “double-counting.” For example, English composition is a prerequisite for courses in the English major, and yet it makes sense that students in the major should not need to take additional courses in composition to fulfill the goals of general education, just because those courses are prerequisites in the major. Some courses in mathematics that are prerequisites for advanced engineering courses also fulfill general education goals; courses in chemistry, although also required for the Mechanical Engineering major, also clearly fulfill general education requirements for science. As long as such counting of credits both for majors and general education is not excessive, there seems no reason not to allow it. By the same token, we don’t want to imply that certain skills are only covered in courses offered in a certain department, nor that once a specific course is taken, a General Education Goal should be viewed as “complete.” On the contrary, the sample chart below reflects the vital importance of addressing General Education Goals in multiple ways, on multiple occasions over the course of a student’s education.

This definition of General Education recognizes the good-faith efforts of many programs to incorporate general education goals into their major curricula. It also provides flexibility to allow students to pursue minors, to participate in study abroad, in internships and service learning opportunities, and other experiences that have been identified as “high-impact” for their effectiveness in achieving general education goals.

Here is a sample chart that shows how a program achieves General Education Goals; new or revised programs should include a similar chart that shows how goals will be met in the program.

Program: Baccalaureate in Arctic Studies

<i>General Education Goal</i>	<i>Evidence</i> (Classes, parts of classes, and programs through which the goals are addressed)				
Communicate clearly and cogently in written, oral, interpersonal and collaborative forms.	6 credits in composition	Capstone course with substantial professional presentation is required	Com 114, Fundamentals of Speech Communication is required	First-Year Experience course is required	
Demonstrate problem-solving and critical thinking abilities through the application of quantitative and analytical reasoning.	Capstone course presentation must include statistical analyses of environmental changes and proposed solutions to environmental challenges	3 credits of college-level mathematics	First-Year Experience course is required	ECON 406 Natural Resource & Environmental Economics is required	
Choose appropriate modes of inquiry to solve diverse problems.	Arctic Studies 401 requires an integrative	Modes of inquiry: English 101, 102	First-Year Experience course is		

	paper in which students propose solutions to problems in the arctic using 3 modes of inquiry.		required		
Discern the patterns and processes of the natural world.	6 credits in natural science. One must be EAS 113 Introduction to Environmental Science.	In Arctic Studies 401 a student displays mastery of an arctic ecosystem.			
Critique the value of technologies and their applications.	Arctic Studies 201 includes study of the impact of technology on the arctic.	First-Year Experience course is required			
Evaluate the interaction of the universal and the particular in historical, political, and cultural experiences.	9 credits in Humanities, Social Sciences, and Foreign Language	Study abroad in the arctic/near arctic or internship that deals with arctic issues is required	3 credits study of a non-U.S. culture	First-Year Experience course is required	
Apply ethical values in making aesthetic and instrumental judgments.	3 credits in fine arts	3 credits in ethics	Arctic Studies 301 requires a major unit on ethical issues in the arctic such as indigenous people's rights and depletion of fisheries.		

Notes

1. "Narrow Learning is Not Enough," *College Learning for the New Global Century* (Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2007), 25-27.
2. "Understanding and appreciating diverse cultures, mastering multiple modes of inquiry, effectively analyzing and communicating information, and recognizing the importance of creativity and values to the human spirit not only allow people to live richer lives but also are a foundation for most careers and for the informed exercise of local, national, and international citizenship. The Commission expects organizations of higher learning to address these important ends, and has embedded this expectation in its Criteria for Accreditation." From "Commission Statement on General Education," *The Handbook of Accreditation* (Chicago: Higher Learning Commission, 2003), 3.4-3.