

University General Education Committee Operating Procedures

Updates Approved September 10, 2021

The University General Education Committee has articulated the following operating procedures that facilitate its work on behalf of the University, in accordance with the authority delegated to it by the University Academic Planning Council.

Overview

The University General Education Requirements are a set of minimum credits required in key areas of study, which must be satisfied by all UW-Madison undergraduates. They are intended to ensure that every graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison acquires the essential core of an undergraduate education. This core establishes a foundation for living a productive life, being a citizen of the world, appreciating aesthetic values, and engaging in lifelong learning in a continually changing world. The requirements provide for students to attain a breadth of understanding across the humanities and arts, social studies, and natural sciences; competence in communication, critical thinking and analytical skills appropriate for a university-educated person; and investigation of the issues raised by living in a culturally diverse society. UW-Madison has also endorsed a comprehensive vision for undergraduate education, *The Wisconsin Experience*, which builds on the core of intellectual and practical skills, basic knowledge of human cultures and the physical world (and, importantly, the strategies used to understand these topics), and tools intended to contribute to their sense of personal and social responsibility; the work students do in their majors and to complete their degrees also helps them to learn what they need to know not just for making a living, but also for making a life.

The College of Letters and Science serves as the trustee charged with overseeing the implementation and administration of these requirements. The University General Education Committee is organized by L&S, and its campus-wide membership is appointed by the Dean of L&S. The committee reports to the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC) and has authority to recommend GER policy changes to the UAPC. The committee considers and advises the university concerning issues relevant to university-wide general education.

A. **Membership** consists of *ex officio* and term members. Members of the faculty, professional advising staff, and two students serve as the rotating members. Faculty and staff members serve three-year (renewable) terms; students may serve up to two years. *Ex officio* members are drawn from key areas across the university, selected by virtue of their programs' contributions to the General Education Curriculum and to campus-wide undergraduate student experience.

1. *Ex officio* membership

- a. Current composition of the *ex officio* membership includes:
 - i. Faculty liaisons overseeing the Communication and Quantitative Reasoning requirements

- ii. At least one member of the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee (which may or may not be the Subcommittee chair)
 - iii. Directors of such units and programs as the Writing Center and the Writing Across the Curriculum program; Cross-College Advising Service; Center for the First-Year Experience; UW-Madison Libraries Teaching and Learning Programs; the First-year Interest Group program; and UGEC Assessment
 - iv. Associate Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning
 - v. Director of University Assessment
- b. Given the constantly evolving nature of the institution's attention to undergraduate education, *ex officio* membership will expand or contract as programs and units change. The inclusion of new units/programs among this group will generally relate to:
- i. Academic focus (with an understanding that in- and out-of-class experiences are increasingly interwoven)
 - ii. Scope of the program and impact on all UW-Madison undergraduates
 - iii. Whether or not the program's mission/interests are already represented on the committee

2. *Term members.*

- a. Term members include:
 - i. Seven to nine members of the faculty, representing the three General Education Divisions of Humanities, Literature and the Arts; Natural Science (Biological and Physical Science); and Social Studies. Faculty shall be drawn from across the colleges whose missions include undergraduate education, and whose faculty and courses contribute to the GER curriculum.
 - ii. A member of the Academic Staff, representing the role of department/program advisors who work primarily with undergraduates.
 - iii. Up to two students, with at least one of whom should be an undergraduate who is subject to completion of the GERs.
- b. Terms: Faculty and staff serve three-year terms. Students serve for one year, eligible for reappointment; terms may be renewed one time.
- c. Nominations:
 - i. Students are selected by the Associated Students of Madison.
 - ii. Members representing the advising community are nominated by the Associate Vice Provost of the Office of Undergraduate Advising.
 - iii. Faculty term members may be nominated by UGEC members (including members serving in the last year of their terms), by their deans, or by the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning. Potential faculty UGEC members should be tenured, active (not emeritus) faculty, engaged in undergraduate teaching in courses or areas covered by General Education, or have an active scholarly interest or expertise in issues of General Education at the post-secondary level.

- d. Nominations are submitted to the Chair of the UGEC, who considers the nominees' interest in and potential contribution to the committee with the Dean of L&S, who appoints the committee.
3. **Operating procedures** are as follows:
- a. **Meetings.** The UGEC meets on the second of each month of the Fall and Spring terms. Additional meetings may be scheduled within a reasonable time upon request of one-third of the members, or by the committee chair in consultation with the Dean and/or the Associate Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning and/or the Provost.
 - b. **Chair.** The Director of General Education, appointed by the Dean of L&S, serves as committee chair.
 - c. **Business.** The business of the committee includes topics directly related to the academic administration of the General Education Requirements as well as to the broader topic of undergraduate education and academic success:
 - i. assessment of student learning in courses that meet the University General Education Requirements;
 - ii. recommendations for change in policy or requirements arising from efforts to understand the efficacy of the requirements;
 - iii. improved communication strategies about the requirements among internal groups (students, faculty, staff);
 - iv. improved communication with external groups, including key transfer institutions, parents, and high school counselors;
 - v. implementation of a changes arising from assessment results; and
 - vi. discussion of the role of liberal education (as achieved divisional breadth and skill requirements) in the university, state and nation.
 - vii. Other topics may be referred to the committee by the Dean, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Provost, or other campus level units whose work may bear upon University General Education.
 - d. **Meeting agendas** are circulated by e-mail approximately in advance of each meeting. This message includes a hypertext link to the meeting materials, which are posted online in the UGEC Box folder.
 - e. **Notice of the open meeting** and a copy of each meeting's agenda is provided by posting an electronic copy on the Office of the Secretary of the Faculty webpage.
 - f. **Meetings are conducted** by following the posted agenda. The chair may, with the consent of council members, change the order of items to address last-minute conflicts in scheduling or to accommodate guests of the council. The chair will invite *ex-officio* observers or guests to lead discussion of items in which those individuals are most expert.
 - g. **General Public Observers**, if present, may contribute to the discussion if recognized by the chair.
 - h. **Voting.** The chair will request a vote on any item requiring formal approval by the committee before it can be forwarded to another entity (e.g., the University Academic Planning Council).
 - i. All "term members" are considered voting members; *ex officio* members' votes are advisory to the committee.

- ii. A quorum exists when a majority of the voting members of the committee is present.
- iii. Although committee consensus is ideal, a simple majority vote will decide an issue.
- iv. Items on which votes are taken include all changes to academic policy and approval of annual reports. The committee may also vote as a means to direct the Dean or Associate Deans to take a particular course of action, or to formally indicate the committee's perspective on an issue under discussion.
- i. **Notes.** Notes are taken by the UGEC staff and edited by the chair. Notes are circulated in draft form to UGEC members and may be revised or amended by members prior to adoption as approved. Notes are available to anyone upon request.
- j. **Annual Report.** Each year, the UGEC chair submits a formal report of UGEC activity to the University Academic Planning Council, which in turn includes a summary of UGEC activity in its report to the Faculty Senate. These reports are prepared from the notes of each meeting, consist of formal actions taken, as well as a brief summary of issues discussed but not acted upon. On request of the Provost, the UGEC chair presents this report to the UAPC.
- k. **General information** about the council, its members and procedures is made available to the college via General Education website, at <https://gened.wisc.edu/>
- l. **Contact Information:** For information about the UGEC, please contact the committee chair, a position currently held by Associate Dean Elaine M. Klein (elaine.klein@wisc.edu or 265-8484).

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