

General Education in U.S. Universities: An Introduction

UNCG's Gen Ed program

The General Education program at UNCG is most similar to other programs with a simple course category list, described below. However, in addition there is a set of course markers (WI, SI, GN, GL) that needs to be satisfied either along with or in addition to courses that satisfy the categories.

https://reg.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/UGB_1718.pdf#page=45

Simple course category list

This type of Gen Ed program consists of a simple category list or distribution list of courses, in which students take courses across a wide range of disciplines. The list typically includes the categories of Writing, Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Mathematics, but may include other categories. For example, East Carolina requires a Health course and NC A&T requires a Global Awareness course and a Student Success course.

East Carolina University

<http://catalog.ecu.edu/content.php?catoid=12&navoid=906>

Kent State University

<http://catalog.kent.edu/undergraduate-university-requirements/kent-core/>

NC A & T University

http://www.ncat.edu/provost/general_education_resources/index.html

Course groupings, with foundational skills

Many schools use some sort of course grouping to help emphasize the role of Gen Ed. This usually includes a group for foundational skills, which should be taken in the first year or so of college. This is the simplest type of course organization, outside of a simple category list. Foundational skills (which go by different names) generally include writing and math/quantitative knowledge, but may include more. It is common for courses to include a diversity or global requirement, either separately or along with another category requirement. Courses at the upper level may be required, with a writing courses in the major as a common example.

Georgia State University

<http://advisement.gsu.edu/self-service/core-curriculum/>

UNC-Charlotte

<http://ucol.uncc.edu/general-education/requirements>

Western Michigan University

<https://wmich.edu/education/advising/gen-ed>

Something beyond course groupings

Several other features may be a part of the Gen Ed program, in addition to informative course groupings. Some schools (UNC-Wilmington, University of Buffalo), require a first-year seminar that may be outside the major or within the major; in either case it helps to orient the student to the significance of the Gen Ed program and liberal learning. Schools may require experiences later in the curriculum to emphasize the significance of college learning, such as an experience “beyond the classroom” (UNC-Wilmington) or a capstone course (Oakland University, University of Buffalo). Oakland University combines additional or overlapping courses with the capstone course as an Integration requirement.

UNC-Wilmington

<http://catalogue.uncw.edu/content.php?catoid=41&navoid=5531>

Oakland University

<https://oakland.edu/gened/>

With integrative component as course cluster

An integrative component within Gen Ed usually refers to a cluster or group of interdisciplinary courses that are related by a theme, designed to cover part of the Gen Ed course requirements. The approach helps demonstrate the many contexts in which Gen Ed knowledge may be used. Examples are not great in number and the integrative component may be either an optional or required part of the curriculum. Oregon State offers optional “Playlists”, which each include about seven courses on a theme, and NC State University offers optional 12-credit thematic tracks. At the University of Buffalo, students are required to choose a three-course Thematic Pathway and a three-course Global Pathway.

Oregon State University

<http://main.oregonstate.edu/baccalaureate-core/current-students/overview-bacc-core-requirements>

NC State University

<https://oucc.dasa.ncsu.edu/general-education-program-gep/gep-category-requirements/>

University at Buffalo

<http://www.buffalo.edu/ubcurriculum.html>