



## **ACE FAQs**

### **September 2007**

#### **(1) Where are we in this whole gen ed reform process?**

In November 2006 the General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) approved Proposal 1 (Institutional Objectives and Learning Outcomes) and Proposal 2 (Structural Criteria). These two proposals were built with considerable input from the faculty. By February 2007 all 8 undergraduate colleges had approved these first two proposals. During spring 2007, GEAC worked on drafts of Proposal 3 (Initial Set of Courses/Experiences that Help Students Achieve the Outcomes and that Meet the Structural Criteria) and Proposal 4 (Assessment and Oversight Process). These proposals have been online ([www.unl.edu/svcaa/gened](http://www.unl.edu/svcaa/gened)) since then, and GEAC is now revising and completing those proposals with feedback received from across the University. In addition, GEAC has drafted a new version of Proposal 1 based on feedback received from the undergraduate colleges. GEAC hopes to finalize these proposals and submit them to the undergraduate colleges by mid-October. Updates are always available online at [www.unl.edu/svcaa/gened](http://www.unl.edu/svcaa/gened).

#### **(2) What kinds of changes has GEAC made to Proposal 1?**

GEAC is proposing three changes:

- A. An expansion of Outcome 2. This expansion creates possibilities for a greater range of courses that might help students achieve this outcome. In addition, it includes a visual literacy component. Faculty in various colleges suggested these changes.
- B. The insertion of “computational” and the substitution of “critical” for “formal” reasoning. These changes were again based on feedback from faculty from across the University. The substitution of “critical” for “formal” is in part an attempt at using a more inclusive term that will open this outcome up to a broader range of courses.
- C. The inclusion of “historical perspectives” in Outcomes 5 and 6. This change was also based on faculty feedback.

#### **(3) Why did GEAC stop short of requiring a history course?**

Requiring a history course would either move ACE beyond 30 hours or would eliminate other disciplines within the social sciences or humanities. The committees arrived at the 30-hour figure after reviewing many important factors, including existing accreditation requirements of four of our eight undergraduate colleges. They considered the most restrictive general education options among the undergraduate colleges, colleges’ varying requirements for majors and for

accreditation, the minimum number of courses taken by students who are trying to “double dip,” the number that would force some breadth, and the minimum number of credits that committee members thought should be applied to each outcome. There is nothing magic about 30 credits, but this number appeared to be the most practical and workable for all of our undergraduate colleges.

Every general education program struggles with this issue. Our aspirations for our students—and the varied demands their post-baccalaureate lives will place on them—are great. There is much that they should know. And of course our own commitments to each of our scholarly areas encourage us to require our students to study within each of them. ACE sets out **common** expectations while anticipating that college requirements, major requirements, and students’ own curiosities will lead them to exceed these.

This last notion is important. ACE is a general education program for all of our undergraduates, regardless of their college or major. GEAC assumes that each college will have its own additional college requirements that build from ACE. Some colleges will no doubt create additional college-specific requirements in areas like history and foreign languages, just as most majors have their own requirements that complement and extend general education.

**(4) The proposed new versions of Outcomes 5 and 6 in Proposal 1 seem to suggest that I must include all of those features in order to get my course certified for ACE, but not all of them are relevant for my course. Why are you dictating what I cover?**

A key word in these two outcomes is “appropriate.” Your colleagues on GEAC believe that you are in the best position to know which of those items are appropriate to your social sciences or humanities course.

**(5) Does the ACE program abandon liberal education?**

No. The ACE program defines general education in terms of tangible student outcomes/accomplishments rather than mere distribution requirements. Colleges may prescribe college-specific distribution requirements, as appropriate for their students, in addition to ACE requirements.

**(6) The structural criteria mandate that students take only one writing course. How can a general education program be based on so little writing?**

Every ACE course must also reinforce at least one of the following as appropriate for the discipline and as identified by the department offering the course: Writing, Communication, Historical Perspectives, Math and Statistics, Critical Thinking, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Ethics, Civics, Social Responsibility, Global Awareness, and Human Diversity. Although some of these courses will reinforce the skills of oral communication, visual communication, or quantitative literacy, many instructors will design their courses so that they reinforce writing skills; indeed writing is likely to be the primary medium for demonstrating the achievement of an outcome. The structural criteria will yield significant writing experiences for students without

being cumbersome or confusing. Ideally, faculty members will begin to devise innovative ways to promote writing behaviors that help students improve their writing skills as they progress through their careers at UNL. GEAC also anticipates that courses which reinforce the other skills cited above will complement students' repertoires. Again, those colleges that wish to create additional college-specific writing requirements are encouraged to do so.

**(7) Will my course be certified for Outcome 1 if I require a lot of writing?**

No. The only courses that will satisfy Outcome 1 are those that have the explicit purpose of teaching writing. A content-based, writing-intensive course will be thought of as reinforcing Outcome 1. Parallels would be true for Outcomes 2 and 3.

**(8) Are any academic disciplines excluded from consideration for satisfying Outcomes 4 through 7?**

No. The subject areas listed in the associated Institutional Objective are meant to be viewed broadly as general categories of study, not narrowly as limiting study to specific disciplines.

**(9) Are any academic disciplines excluded from consideration for satisfying Outcome 10?**

No. GEAC imagines that any integrative, culminating, or capstone-like experience in any major can be used to satisfy Outcome 10, although some colleges have capstone requirements based on accreditation standards that may prevent a capstone course in one college from satisfying a college or major capstone requirement in another college. GEAC imagines that students are most likely to meet Outcome 10 well after they are committed to a major and approaching graduation.

**(10) How does this proposed structure accommodate students transferring across colleges?**

If a student has met an ACE outcome in College A, then that student has met that same ACE outcome in College B. Proposals 1 and 2 eliminate the need for a lengthy matrix in the Bulletin explaining which courses are accepted by which colleges to meet which general education area.

However, students need to recognize that although ACE courses satisfy ACE Outcomes across colleges, they may not always satisfy additional college-specific or major requirements. For example, if an ACE course is taken to satisfy both ACE and college-specific or major requirements in one college but the student decides to transfer to a major in another college, the ACE course may only satisfy ACE requirements but not college-specific or major requirements in the second college.

**(11) How does this proposed structure address students transferring from other institutions?**

Through established review of course equivalency and articulation agreements, the office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies will begin providing schools from which most students transfer credit to UNL with information regarding the ACE Institutional Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes. For a course from another institution to transfer to UNL as an ACE course equivalent, the home institution's course description and syllabus must identify the Outcome to be addressed and describe how the student work in the course fulfills the ACE requirement. When a course from another institution is established as equivalent to a UNL course through articulation or equivalency agreements, then that course will fulfill the same ACE Outcome as the equivalent ACE-certified UNL course.

**(12) How can Structural Criterion 3 be applied when it conflicts with each college's right to set its own curriculum?**

GEAC is proposing that our undergraduate colleges come together to create a common general education program for all of our undergraduate students. This common program in no way prohibits colleges from creating their own additional college-specific requirements or major requirements. Proposal 4 creates mechanisms for the involvement of each of our undergraduate colleges in the review and approval of ACE courses and the oversight of the program.

**(13) What is the status of Proposal 3 and 4?**

Very drafty versions of Proposals 3 and 4 have been online since May. GEAC is now revising and completing those proposals with feedback received from across the University. After consultation with representatives of the Faculty Senate and others, as well as receiving feedback at the two Forums scheduled for September 14 and 17, GEAC hopes to refer final versions of Proposals 3 and 4 to the undergraduate colleges by mid-October. (At the same time, the new version of Proposal 1 will also be turned over to the colleges for review and approval.)