

draft: 070428
a very drafty draft

ACE Proposal 4 – Governance and Oversight of the ACE Program

This proposal describes the structure and process of administering the ACE Program. The document contains sections on an oversight committee (the ACE Committee), including membership, duties, powers, voting procedures, and responsibilities of this committee; a form for use in submitting UNL courses for ACE certification, and a Departmental Agreement for departments offering ACE courses. Details of the assessment plan are included in a separate document, but a brief description of assessment is included in this proposal.

I. The ACE Committee

The General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) recommends that the ACE Committee be a subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee (UCC), consisting of one representative from each of the undergraduate colleges as determined by their respective faculties, and that the ACE Committee operating procedures be those specified below in this document (ACE Proposal 4) as approved by the undergraduate colleges. (*Motion passed by GEAC on April 27, 2007.*)

Faculty representatives from the undergraduate colleges are the only voting members. Non-voting members may be added to the ACE Committee as determined by the UCC for purposes of providing information and promoting communication with the university community. (*Although not moved and passed specifically, this paragraph was clearly the intent of GEAC as indicated by discussion of the above motion.*)

II. ACE Committee Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the ACE Committee shall be as follows:

- A. To review and approve college requests for ACE certification.
- B. To approve non-substantive changes regarding the ACE program and to make formal recommendations to the undergraduate colleges regarding substantive changes in ACE requirements.
- C. To serve, with the Dean of the Office of Undergraduate Studies, as the academic planning and assessment oversight group for the ACE program.
- D. To remove ACE certification provided there is evidence that the department offering the course is not meeting terms of the ACE agreement or providing opportunities for students to fulfill the stated outcome(s).

The above four items numbered were approved by formal vote by GEAC on 030907.

III. ACE Committee Procedures

- A. Substantive actions require unanimous positive votes by the college faculty representatives. Substantive actions include, but are not limited to: certification of ACE courses, recommended changes in the ACE program, and removal of ACE certification from courses. *(The issue of unanimous votes was again discussed in GEAC on April 27, 2007 but there was no motion to change this stipulation.)*
- B. Non-substantive actions require a simple majority of positive votes by the college faculty representatives. Non-substantive actions include, but are not limited to: acceptance of non-credit bearing co-curricular experiences as fulfilling ACE outcomes in individual cases, advising issues, interpretation of guidelines and policies.
- C. Committee actions on items not specifically mentioned in IV A and IV B can be considered non-substantive by unanimous positive vote of college faculty representatives.

(GEAC discussed section III but did not act on it by passed motion on 040607, although there was considerable discussion in GEPT over voting procedures and three options were provided at the open forum on March 26. The above wording of section IV is JJ's decision based on open forum discussion.)

IV. Department and college nomination of courses for ACE certification:

Any UNL course submitted for ACE certification must be recognized as an ACE-eligible course by the college in which the course will be housed and offered. The respective Colleges will forward proposals for consideration of ACE certification to the ACE Committee. Prior to a vote by the ACE Committee, the initial lists of courses proposed for ACE certification will be made available to the campus community via the web for review and comments. *(Wording approved by GEAC vote on 030907; underlined text was discussed as a friendly amendment but not passed by motion).*

V. ACE certification course proposal form

Request for approval of an existing UNL course for ACE credit:

1. Course number, name, and current description from the UNL Undergraduate Bulletin:

2. Learning Outcome(s) to be satisfied by this course:

a. _____

b. _____

3. Outcomes or skills to be reinforced by this course:

_____ Writing _____ Communication _____ Historical Perspective

_____ Math/Statistics _____ Critical Thinking _____ Teamwork

_____ Ethics _____ Problem Solving _____ Social Responsibility

_____ Human diversity _____ Global Awareness _____ Civics

4. Attach a syllabus for this course. Syllabi attached to this proposal request must contain enough information to allow faculty members from other disciplines to determine whether the course meets the intent of the ACE program. The following information must be provided:

a. Faculty contact information (in case committee members have questions about the proposal).

b. A brief description of opportunities this course will provide for students to acquire skills necessary to achieve the Learning Outcome(s) listed above (if not included in the syllabus).

c. A brief description of the assignment(s) designed to provide students with opportunities described in b and the product expected (if not included in the syllabus).

d. Graded product(s) required for demonstration of the Learning Outcome(s) (if not included in the syllabus).

5. Attach a copy of the Department ACE Agreement.

GEPT voted, on March 2, 2007, to approve the proposal form draft and forward the course proposal form to GEAC for consideration.

VI. ACE agreement for departments offering ACE courses

The Department offering a course certified for ACE credit will ensure that:

- A. The course's bulletin entry shows the UNL Institutional Objective(s) to be addressed, the Learning Outcome(s) to be satisfied by the course, and Outcome(s) to be reinforced by the course.
- B. Information about Institutional Objectives and Learning Outcomes associated with this course is made available both to students and to faculty members teaching the course.
- C. Some graded materials in the course include student products upon which the instructor provides guidance and comments, either individually or collectively, and which are appropriate for deposition in an assessment repository. The products may be, but are not limited to, papers, performances, exhibitions, or projects, i.e., they may encompass the full range of scholarly products typically generated by individuals at comprehensive universities.
- D. A reasonable sample of such products students' is provided for deposition in an assessment repository; at least one example should be from a student who is in the top 10% of the class and at least one example should be from a student whose grades are in the middle range for that class. The items should indicate the students' class, major, and estimated grade in the class.
- E. A brief reflection of students' achievement of the stated outcomes is provided, to be placed in the assessment repository along with the student work.
- F. The department engages in an on-going effort to develop common scoring guidelines for use in the assessment process.
- G. If this agreement is executed the course will be an ACE certified course for five years provided certification is granted by the ACE Committee.
- H. The department will review the certification agreement by the end of the fourth academic year and may request recertification for an additional five year period.

(GEAC discussed some of these items, especially D., F., G., and H. at the 040607 meeting. As a result of that discussion, Amy Goodburn is supposed to be providing new, more general, wording for D.)

VII. ACE Co-curricular activities:

Any co-curricular activity that is submitted for ACE credit must fulfill the following criteria:

- A. The activity will be one for which the student can and does receive academic credit under existing UNL independent study or internship opportunities.
- B. Forty-five hours of ACE co-curricular activity will be equivalent to one credit of coursework. ACE co-curricular activity is thus the equivalent of regularly scheduled laboratories in terms of time spent on the task and credit hours awarded.
- C. A UNL faculty member will supervise, direct, or oversee the activity.
- D. There will be an assessable product resulting from the co-curricular activity. This product will include, or be accompanied by, at least two type-written, single-spaced, pages of the student's own reflection on the extent to which the co-curricular activity fulfilled a Learning Outcome intent, and no more than a single such page of evaluation by the supervising faculty member. The product, with accompanying reflection and evaluation, will be kept on file and available for review by an assessment committee for two years.

VII. Recommended practices for ACE courses

The following recommended practices are intended to help faculty members design their ACE courses so that the intent of the general education program is achieved insofar as possible given the resources available, diversity of departments offering ACE courses, and different levels of ACE courses. These guidelines are not intended to be regulations which dictate approval or rejection of courses, for ACE credit, by various curriculum committees or other governing bodies. Instead, they are to be considered endorsements of faculty efforts to increase the rigor of their courses as appropriate for the course level, the audience, and the discipline involved.

During several discussions and open forums with various groups across campus, the most concern was expressed about content and expectations of the proposed general education program in three areas: writing, historical perspective, and communication. In the case of communication, both oral and visual communication skills were mentioned as areas in which the typical UNL undergraduate curriculum needed strengthening. Our position is that “strengthening” and “rigor” are best accomplished by individual faculty members feeling empowered to ask that students perform to a certain extent and at a desired level, and that perhaps the least effective way to increase rigor and prepare our students for a changing and uncertain future is through committee rules, regulations, policy, and oversight. Thus we encourage all faculty members teaching ACE courses to use the Institutional Objectives, Learning Outcomes, ACE departmental agreement, and personal creativity to support any and all efforts to strengthen the UNL undergraduate curriculum.

(1) Writing:

The ACE Committee recommends that in ACE courses in those disciplines for which written products are the standard measure of scholarship, faculty members focus on (a) designing assignments that help students both write to learn and learn to write; (b) support students' writing through instructional methods such as responding to drafts, peer review sessions, providing collective feedback, use of examples, and asking for student reflection on their own writing process; and (c) assessing student writing in ways that not only evaluate the work at hand, but also help students understand their strengths and weaknesses as writers and provide guidance for improving their writing.

(2) Historical content and perspective:

Many if not most ACE course subjects and disciplines are ones that would be complemented by inclusion of historical perspectives. The ACE Committee recommends that faculty members (a) add such content to the course; (b) design some of the graded material so that students must use and analyze historical content; and (c) ensure that students understand the role that such historical perspective plays with respect to their understanding of the subject and discipline.

(3) Visual and oral communication:

Many if not most ACE course subjects and disciplines are ones that would be complemented by inclusion of material or exercises involving visual communication, oral communication, or especially combinations of the two. The ACE Committee recommends that faculty members add such content to their courses and also to make sure students understand the role that such communication skills play with respect to both their understanding of the discipline and their own professional development.

(4) Institutional Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

Faculty members teaching ACE courses should feel completely free to use the idealism expressed by the Institutional Objectives to justify assignments and other course activities relevant to the Learning Outcome for that course.

VIII. Assessment

The proposed assessment plan is designed to support ACE's transformation of the general education experience from a "list of courses taken" to one with a focus on products, reflection, and intellectual progress. Evidence gathered will determine the extent to which the ACE Program meets the Institutional Learning Objectives and provide feedback to the faculty about the relationship between teaching practices and actual learning so discussions about the structure of the program and effective teaching strategies are fostered. The proposed process and evidence collected will **NOT** be used to grade instructors, individual courses, departments, major programs, or colleges, or to provide information to be used in personnel or budgeting decisions.

Principles of the proposed assessment plan:

- (1) Honor and respect the faculty role in the teaching and learning process.
- (2) Use already proven methods course instructors use to assess student learning for embedded assessment.
- (3) Structure assessment as a continuous and systematic process of inquiry into what our students are learning and the effectiveness of the ACE program for on-going improvement.
- (4) Provide an institutional summary of the process and results for accountability purposes.

Instructor responsibilities:

- (1) For each student, the instructor will develop one or more assessments that sufficiently demonstrate the ACE Outcome(s) for which the course is approved and in a manner that is appropriate for the discipline. Assessments might include especially designed exams or parts of exams, written papers, oral presentation/projects, research projects, performances, validated tests in the field, or portfolios.
- (2) A reasonable sampling of student products (at least three) will be assessed by the course instructor using a scoring guide developed for the appropriate ACE outcome.
- (3) Representative groups of faculty will develop scoring guides for each ACE Outcome, identifying a shared set of characteristics for instructors to use when assessing student work.
- (4) Instructors will provide, to the ACE Program Assessment team, a sampling of student work by submitting examples from the top students and from students in the middle of the class grade distribution, along with faculty evaluation of the students' performance relative to the course outcome. Instructors will also provide their own brief summary of overall student performance relative to the ACE Outcome in the class.

Institutional-level assessment of ACE:

- (1) ACE Assessment Team will aggregate these results from courses across the institution and conduct external review of samples of student work. The Team will then produce a brief report on their conclusion of how well the ACE outcomes are being achieved and make recommendations for improving the assessment process.
- (2) Institution will make public the procedures used in this process including a high-level summary of results highlighting success and describing planned change or action for areas where improvement was identified.

Timeline

To keep this process manageable and focused all 10 ACE Outcomes will be assessed over a period of four years by assessing one Institutional Objective each year starting with the most comprehensive ACE Institutional Objective 4.

Five year plan for ACE assessment:

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Preparation (Scoring Guides)</i>	<i>ACE Objective to be assessed</i>	<i>Follow-up on Recommendations</i>	<i>National Measures</i>
2007-08	IO 4			
2008-09	IO 1	IO 4		
2009-10	IO 2	IO 1	IO 4	
2010-11	IO 3	IO 2	IO 1	NSSE
2011-12		IO 3	IO 2	
2012-13		ACE Program Review	IO 3	
2013-14		IO 4	ACE Program Review	NSSE

Additional Considerations:

The ACE Committee will ensure that students, faculty, advisers, staff, and other constituents are routinely informed about the status of the ACE program, the progress and potential problems encountered in the assessment process, and the resources required for conduct of the program.