

Montgomery College

**General Education Program
Draft Proposal for Revision
Information Session**

Overview of Maryland Higher
Education Commission
(MHEC)

General Education Guidelines

Pages 1 - 7 in Handout

What is the MHEC Policy on the Transfer of General Education Courses?

- The General Education Program a student takes at one public college or university will transfer without further review to another public institution without the need for a course-to-course match. That is, courses that are designated as general education by a sending institution will transfer as general education even if the receiving institution does not offer that specific course or has not designated that course as general education.
- Courses designated as meeting the general education requirements at any Maryland public college shall be applicable to the general education requirements at any other Maryland public college or university.

(From the MHEC Student Guide to Transfer)

Question: What are the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) requirements for Maryland community college general education programs?

MHEC gives colleges and universities very general requirements for the development of general education programs. MHEC lists required "areas" (totaling 30 credits minimum) for an Associate of Arts degree:

- (a) Arts and humanities (One course in each of two disciplines in arts and humanities)
- (b) Social and behavioral sciences (One course in each of two disciplines in social and behavioral sciences)
- (c) Biological and physical sciences (Two science courses, at least one of which shall be a laboratory course)
- (d) Mathematics (One course in mathematics at or above the level of college algebra), and
- (e) English composition (One course in English composition)

and allows institutions to include an IE category, Interdisciplinary and Emerging Issues.

(1) In addition to the five required areas in §A of this regulation, a public institution may include up to 8 semester hours in a sixth category that addresses emerging issues that institutions have identified as essential to a full program of general education for their students.

Question: Where did the General Education Committee find specific Maryland state requirements for general education course criteria?

The Committee used both Maryland Higher Education Commission requirements (listed in COMAR, the Code of Maryland) www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/13b/13b.06.01.03.htm and "General Education Implementation Guiding Principles" developed in 1997 and updated in 2002 by the Maryland Intersegmental Chief Academic Officers (referred to below as MDCAO) <http://mdcao.usmd.edu/> . Using these general guidelines, the Gen Ed Committee also based criteria on other factors, described in the Draft Proposal, and "Characteristics of an Educated Student" created in an MC faculty workshop on General Education, August 2004. All supporting materials from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) and outcomes document from the MC Workshop are shown on the MC Gen Ed Webpage.

Question: Does MHEC specifically list which types courses can, or cannot, be included in each area?

No - institutions determine which courses fit into categories. MHEC lists only these further general requirements for courses:

- J. General education courses shall reflect current scholarship in the discipline and provide reference to theoretical frameworks and methods of inquiry appropriate to academic disciplines.
- K. Courses that are theoretical may include applications, but all applications courses shall include theoretical components if they are to be included as meeting general education requirements.
- L. Public institutions may incorporate knowledge and skills involving the use of quantitative data, effective writing, information retrieval, and information literacy when possible in the general education program.

Question: Does MHEC have a specific requirement stating that courses must have an assessment level of EN 101 and RD 120?

Answer: No. This was a decision made by the MC Collegewide Curriculum Committee in response to the AAR recommendation. Using an assessment level of EN 101/RD 120 is one way assure that courses meet a definition of "college-level."

MHEC does not specify an assessment level for general education courses.

Question: Where exactly does MHEC state that studio arts courses are not acceptable in a gen ed program?

MHEC does not state that studio arts courses are not acceptable in general education programs, nor are courses in studio arts specifically eliminated under the MC Draft Proposal's course criteria guidelines. Courses in arts may have a studio or creativity component. Here are the two Maryland state guidelines on arts courses:

- MHEC: Item K: Courses that are theoretical may include applications, but all applications courses shall include theoretical components if they are to be included as meeting general education requirements.
- MDCAO: (3) "Arts" means courses that examine aesthetics and the development of the aesthetic form and explore the relationship between theory and practice. Courses in this area may include fine arts, performing and studio arts, appreciation of the arts, and history of the arts.

Question: Why was a multicultural course requirement left out of the proposal?

Answer: The definition of a multicultural course in the current Gen Ed program had broadened to the point that students were taking courses marked "multicultural" only to find that they did not meet a similar requirement at transfer institutions. There is no multicultural course requirement at the Maryland state level. The proposal suggested indicating courses in our program that appeared frequently in this category at a survey of transfer schools and strongly suggesting that students include one in their general education course choices.

Question: Speech is considered to be a Humanities course by MHEC (COMAR item G "A public institution may allow a speech communication or foreign language course to be part of the arts and humanities category.") Currently, MC is allowed to specifically require a speech course in the general education program. Will MHEC allow us to continue including this specific course requirement, or has something changed?

Speech Courses / MHEC Policy

- This MHEC policy still stands - institutions may elect to include a specific speech course requirement in general education programs under MHEC guidelines. Speech courses have not been eliminated under the proposal. The recommendation to move speech to a choice within the Humanities Distribution was not based on an MHEC requirement, but rather decided by issues discussed in the Draft Proposal, Page 19.

Question: Does MHEC require schools to include the IE (Interdisciplinary and Emerging Issues) category?

Answer: The IE category has been in existence for many years. Although MC's current program doesn't include an IE category, the one-credit HE (Health) course requirement has always transferred in the IE category to other MD public institutions. The Draft Proposal recommends allowing students to decide whether they want to take an IE course or courses from one of the Distribution Areas, depending on their program and educational goals.

Question: COMAR doesn't mention the Five Competencies for General Education. Where do the competencies come from?

MHEC's [Guidelines for 2004 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Reports](#) describes the process of assessing general education student learning outcomes. "As part of the State's performance accountability process, Maryland's public colleges and universities must provide the Commission with a report every three years about their progress in improving student learning, instructional effectiveness, and curricula." The five competencies described in the Report are based on "**essential skills that are used in Middle States' accreditation process:** written and oral communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy."

Question: If MHEC policy isn't driving the changes to the General Education program, what is?

The General Education Committee considered many factors in the Draft Proposal. It is our hope that faculty will carefully consider the entire Proposal to see the many considerations that shaped the recommendations...

Factors that Prompted a General Education Review at Montgomery College

- Montgomery College's current General Education Program was last revised 11 years ago in 1996
- The Academic Area Review (AAR) of General Education, conducted in 2003 and finalized in 2004, asked questions about specific requirements in the current program

Factors that Prompted a General Education Review at Montgomery College, continued

- A team of 5 gen ed committee members, deans & Rockville provost attended a four day AACU National Conference on trends in General Education, May 2004
- MHEC asked all MD institutions to report on the effectiveness of their general education programs, which started an Outcomes Assessment process for general education courses in 2004.

Factors that Prompted a General Education Review at Montgomery College

- The MC Gen Ed Committee conducted two all-faculty activities on General Education, in August 2004 and January 2005
- The Curriculum Committee expanded the membership of the Gen Ed Committee from 5 to 12 members in May of 2004, to represent all Gen Ed disciplines and all campuses.

First MC Workshop on General Education, August 25, 2004

Faculty addressed the following questions:

- 1. Define the goal – what is an “educated” Montgomery College student?**
- 2. Identify (with rationale) top three additional competencies/areas of general education that are fundamental to general education at Montgomery College.**
- 3. Identify possible thematic/structural/cognitive/disciplinary/competency- referenced framings for the Gen Ed program at MC.**
- 4. Identify possible ways of complying with Gen Ed requirements/meeting competencies.**

January 2005 All Faculty Opening Meeting Takoma Park Campus

Panel Discussion of General Education Program Goals and Competencies

Led by Dr. Robert Schoenberg,
Association of American Colleges & Universities
(AACU) Fellow,

Author of GENERAL EDUCATION IN AN AGE
OF STUDENT MOBILITY Why Do I Have to
Take This Course? or Credit Hours, Transfer,
and Curricular Coherence

Factors that Influenced Gen Ed Committee to Propose Changes

The specific comments from the Academic Area Review (AAR, pages 10 – 15 in packet) included:

- Review the place of the current health requirement in the General Education program.
- Review the place of speech courses among the Colleges' General Education foundation courses; consider adding the courses to the humanities distribution area, or in a new "emerging issues" category.
- Address the issue of whether courses that have no assessment level requirements should be included among the College's General Education distribution courses.

The Committee's Process

- Studied general education programs at Maryland community colleges
- Studied general education programs at Maryland four-year public and private institutions, and neighboring DC schools
- Created charts to summarize and compare these programs (available on the Gen Ed Website)

Committee Process, Continued

- **Considered the requirements and the competitive environment at the top transfer destination.**

The General Education Committee acknowledged that the majority of students transfer to the University of Maryland, College Park. UMCP's freshman admission requirements have become increasingly selective over the past 10 years, creating a very competitive environment for transfer students who arrive at the sophomore and junior level.

UMCP Freshman Profile

- UMCP Admissions Office receives approximately 20,000 applications for 4,000 spots in each freshman class.
- Incoming freshmen have an average 3.86 high school GPA
- Over 68% of admitted freshmen have SAT verbal scores over 600; over 78% have SAT math scores over 600.

UMCP's CORE General Education Program

- Requires one course each in
 - history
 - literature
- Arts courses for native students must be theory-based
- Studio arts courses taken at community colleges are not accepted in engineering programs at UMCP under ABET (national engineering accreditation) rules.

Other Considerations

- Review of transfer data for MC students
- National Student Loan Clearinghouse Data paints a picture of students transferring not only to Maryland colleges and universities but to schools across the nation. Students who take less traditional general education courses sometimes encounter difficulty transferring courses into gen ed categories outside of the Maryland system.

The MHEC Transfer Policy in MD

The MHEC policy guarantees the transfer of general education courses to Maryland public four-year institutions...

however...

some institutions have specific lower-level requirements that are not met, for example, UMCP's history & literature requirement; Towson's two lab science course requirement.

National Attention on Promoting Smoother Transfer Pathways

In October 2006, the General Education Committee reviewed a draft copy the Spelling Commission's "A TEST OF LEADERSHIP: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education," (Attachment 5). The report focuses on ways to promote degree completion. The statement regarding the transfer of credits (p. 15) supported the direction of our draft:

Barriers to the recognition of transfer credits between different types of institutions pose challenges to students and prevent institutions from increasing capacity. Students too often receive conflicting information about credit-transfer policies between institutions, leading to an unknown amount of lost time and money (and additional federal financial aid) in needlessly repeated course work. Underlying the information confusion are institutional policies and practice on student transfers that are too often inconsistently applied, even within the same institution.

Major Points of Change (from the Executive Summary, p. 8)

1) Expansion of the Competency areas to include three new **Areas of Proficiency**:

- **Global and Cultural Awareness**
- **Arts and Aesthetic Awareness**
- **Personal, Social and Civic Responsibilities**

These areas are not distribution-specific but reflect skills to be developed across disciplines to support the Montgomery College Credo. [\(P. 5\)](#)

Additional Major Points of Change

Executive Summary, P. 8, Item

- 2) An increase in assessment levels to make all courses college level: All general education courses will have an assessment level of EN 101/101A and RD 120 with the exception of world languages.

(P. 10)

Change in Foundation Courses

Executive Summary, Item 4, p. 8

- Move speech requirement to a choice among Humanities courses
- Add an IE Category – students may elect one IE course or take an additional course from another Distribution Area, depending on major/program/education goals.

Major Changes

- **Renewed emphasis on Integrating General Education Competencies and Proficiency Areas into All Courses**
- Although course transferability is an important feature of this proposal, a second, equally important emphasis is the integration of general education outcomes into courses in all disciplines.

Major Changes

- Emphasis on consistency of course outcomes for General Education Courses
- Information about General Education Outcomes on syllabus
- Suggestions for assessment activities and increased information for faculty
- Improved advising materials for students

This is a Starting Point

In discussing this proposal with colleagues on campus and collegewide, please understand that that we welcome input and feedback. Some members of the General Education Committee felt that we should continue to discuss and debate the issues in our small group. A majority feel that the Committee has done what it was tasked to do, namely, put forward a reasonable proposal that addresses the issues raised by the AAR. But now, the time has come for the Montgomery College community to vet the proposal. There is no supposition by any General Education Committee member that this document will be rubber stamped. Nor should it be! General education affects every student in many ways and affects all faculty members. Each member of the Montgomery College community should read, contemplate the implications of and react to the proposal.

**The document should not be viewed
as the throwing down of a gauntlet.
It is the opening of a dialog.**

Future Steps

- Consider drafting an amendment or submitting an alternate proposal. Suggested Amendments Guidelines included in today's materials and on the Gen Ed Website.
- Discuss rough drafts with a member of the Gen Ed Committee – many issues were discussed in proposal development, perhaps we can help.
- Fly even a rough draft of an amendment on the Gen Ed Website so that others know that something is in progress and how to contact you to assist.

Future Steps

- The Faculty Council Chairs of all three campuses have been given the task of organizing Faculty Forums to discuss General Education Issues next Fall 2007. Watch for additional information on Forums and Meetings.
- Invite a Gen Ed Committee Member to a Discipline Meeting to discuss specific courses and issues

Future Steps

- All courses will reapply for General Education status. Consider how current courses would be evaluated under the Draft Proposal Course Review Guidelines
- See “Sample Courses and Issues Page” and “Course Review Guidelines”, p. 18 and 18A in today’s packet.
- Disciplines are strongly urged to consider the evaluation of specific courses for General Education.

General Education Forum for Written Communication

www.montgomerycollege.edu/genedcomm

- Updated continuously
- Comments Page through MC Infonet

Tentative Timeline

- May – August 2007: Disciplines are encouraged to discuss Draft Proposal; consider how courses may be evaluated, and develop proposals for amendments or alternate proposals as desired
- Fall 2007 – Faculty Forums and meetings to discuss the Draft and amendments, etc.
- Nov. 16 - 21 – suggested date to submit amendments or alternate proposals
- Dec. 1 until January Meeting, consideration of amendments
- January Meeting – Final full faculty vote

Some final words:

The Draft Proposal
is a DRAFT;
please participate in the
process to improve it.