**TIPS**

**For applying for course inclusion into the General Education Program**

1. **Remember what the goals of the General Education Council (GEC) are as they review your proposal for inclusion:**
	1. Ensure that courses in the General Education Program are sufficiently addressing the Learning Outcomes

		1. This goal is about the way that a course is designed. We know that courses are addressing many different disciplinary issues and that they can be used for many different purposes. However, GEC needs to ensure that each course in the program sufficiently addresses the General Education outcomes for its component. Thus, you need to show us that your course is addressing the relevant learning outcomes. You can do this in several ways. In the overall description of the course on the inclusion form, address the particular learning outcomes for the component selected and describe in how the course is incorporating these outcomes. In the sections addressing the dimensions of each learning outcome, it should be clear that the learning outcome is receiving a substantial amount of attention in the course.
	2. Ensure that students in each course in the General Education program are successful in their courses such that they achieve the learning goals for the program.

		1. This goal is about the assessment of student performance. At the initial stage of including a course in the program for the first time, we do not expect (or want) to see any data on student performance yet, but we will need it when the component courses are assessed (every three years). At this initial stage, we need to make sure that the instructors for the course have a clear idea of what they will do (i.e. what information they will collect) that will be given to GEC later on. This is the Assessment Plan. It should include a relatively clear idea of which pieces of information (e.g. student performance measures) will ultimately be sent to the GEC as evidence for performance on each of the dimensions for each learning outcome.
		2. Another element to this goal is for the department/ instructor to come up with a benchmark level of proficiency that you expect for each Learning Outcome dimension. For example, “75% of students will reach the proficiency level for this dimension”. The actual level should be determined by the department/instructor based on reasonable expectations of the students – there is no expectation that your students will be 100% successful on every (or any) particular dimension. GEC does NOT have a particular level in mind, but we ask that you give us a starting point and explain why that starting point makes sense for your course. Note that very low or very high expectations will require a more detailed explanation of why this level has been selected. GEC will generally expect to see student performance similar to this level when we review your assessment data in several years BUT we also know that your first estimate at this value may not be correct and that sometimes particular class sections may not meet a benchmark (for good reasons).
2. **It is up to you (the Department) to choose which is the most appropriate Component for your course.** There are a variety of approaches and strategies to this choice and only the department and its faculty can determine which is the right one for them and their students. Once you have selected it, the GEC will review the course for only that component and will assess it for this component when the time comes. At the time of assessment, you will request re-inclusion in the program and you may (at that time) switch to another component. It might be possible to switch to another component earlier if there is a change in the course, but that would entail a new inclusion request to join the General Education program.
3. **Remember that GEC can only review a COURSE for inclusion to the General Education Program, not specific instructors nor different sections of the same course.** This means that if there are multiple sections of a course, all the instructors should come together on a plan that they can agree on. A couple of helpful tips...

	1. It is acceptable to include some variability in your assessment plan to cover different approaches in different sections (e.g. “assessed either through a final paper OR the final exam essay questions”). Keep in mind that too much variability will not give us a clear idea of what will be done, however. (e.g. “…assessed through some kind of assignment at the end of the class” is probably too vague).
	2. A good practice is to get the faculty who are planning on teaching the different sections to come together and come up with a plan together that everyone can live with.
	3. There is no requirement that the exact content in all sections being offered of a course is the same. This is up to the CUP process and may be allowed for courses with varying topics. However, if this course will be part of the General Education Program, it must address the same Component in every section and must adhere to the plan developed for assessment for the Gen Ed program. Because the Components are not strictly linked to content, there is no problem with varying content in a General Education course as long as the Learning Outcomes are addressed.
4. **Be smart about your Assessment Plan**
	1. GEC is willing to work with departments that have certification or other assessment requirements so that assessment plans can overlap with the General Education requirements for assessment. We will still need to ensure that the General Education Learning Outcomes are addressed, but we do not want to compound your assessment work more than is absolutely necessary.
	2. While GEC needs to understand that the Learning Outcomes (and all their dimensions) are sufficiently addressed in your course, you do not necessarily have to provide many different pieces of evidence to document assessment. Consider using summative assignments that cover activities that were conducted throughout the semester (e.g. final papers or exams) as your actual assessment tool (i.e. from which you will ultimately provide GEC assessment data). You are also welcome to use smaller pieces of work, if that makes the most sense. GEC will review whatever you decide on, but we want to encourage you to think about making this plan reasonable for the faculty teaching the course. The goal is to ensure a quality experience for students (and be able to document it), NOT to drive faculty into an overworked frenzy (really!)
	3. It is fine to use the same piece of student work to document achievement for more than one dimension or Learning Outcome, as long as the work is appropriate to the dimension/outcome. Please make sure that we can understand this link from the text provided in the assessment plan box.
5. **Keep in mind that ALL dimensions of a Learning Outcome must be addressed in a course**
	1. BUT not all dimensions need to be equally weighted. For example, if one dimension is not as heavily covered in a course, it is fine as long as the other dimensions are strongly represented. It is not acceptable to have all but one of the dimensions only weakly represented in the course or to have missing dimensions. If you find this, then it may be that your course is not a good fit for the Learning Outcome.
	2. You need to provide assessment plans and benchmarks for EACH dimension. Please do not lump your plans under a single header for the entire Learning Outcome. You are welcome to repeat material if the plan for several dimensions is essentially the same, but again, please make sure that we can understand that the assessment tool used ties to the specific dimension.
6. **Remember that the GEC is less concerned about content and more concerned about Learning Outcomes.** We do need to understand a little about your course (e.g. its subject area) to understand how it will relate to the Learning Outcomes you have selected, but our primary focus is on the Learning Outcomes. Make sure that your descriptions focus on BOTH Learning Outcomes.
7. **Assume that the process for both course inclusion AND course assessment will be interactive between the department and the GEC.** GEC is planning to work with applicants iteratively to ensure that a good plan is in place and that the department/faculty are clear about our expectations.
8. **Remember that this is a new process for EVERYONE. GEC is finding its way through this process at the same time that you are**. We have yet to review any inclusion proposals as a council and so we do not have all the answers. We will work through issues with you as we go along and over time we will work out the bugs!