

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)'s accreditation eligibility requirements, standards, and policies related to general education requirements excerpted from <http://www.nwccu.org/>

**Note: Bold & Bold emphasis was added to points relevant to Curriculum Convocation GER presentation.**

### **Standard 2.C – Undergraduate Program**

The undergraduate program is designed to provide students with a substantial, coherent, and articulated exposure to the broad domains of knowledge.

The Commission encourages a tripartite structure for baccalaureate and academic or transfer associate degree programs: **(1) general education requires students to master competencies for independent learning and to develop an awareness of the fundamental areas of knowledge**; (2) the major requires students to achieve a knowledge base in a specific area of concentration; and (3) electives provide the opportunity for students to pursue other intellectual interests. **The instructional program, as a whole, is based on a clear rationale with the component parts designed to reflect that rationale.**

**Baccalaureate and academic or transfer associate degree programs include a substantial core of general education instruction with identifiable outcomes and require competence in (a) written and oral communication, (b) quantitative reasoning, (c) critical analysis and logical thinking, and (d) literacy in the discourse or technology appropriate to the program of study.**

- 2.C.1 The institution requires of all its degree and pre-baccalaureate programs a component of general education and/or related instruction that is published in its general catalog in clear and complete terms.
- 2.C.2 **The general education component of the institution's degree programs is based on a rationale that is clearly articulated and is published in clear and complete terms in the catalog. It provides the criteria by which the relevance of each course to the general education component is evaluated.**
- 2.C.3 **The general education program offerings include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, mathematics, and the social sciences. The program may also include courses that focus on the interrelationships between these major fields of study.**

### **Policy 2.1 General Education/Related Instruction Requirements**

The Commission endorses the concept of general education and, as described below, **requires of all undergraduate programs a substantial and coherent program of general education** or a program of related instruction. By design, the policy is intended to be qualitative rather than quantitative in nature. No formula for specific application or particular pattern of general education is endorsed. However, every institution is expected to publish in its general catalog a clear and complete statement of its requirements for general education and/or related instruction, as appropriate.

**A substantial core of general education instruction is regarded as an essential component of all baccalaureate degree programs and of all academic or transfer associate degree programs.** Similarly, a core of related instruction is regarded as a necessary integral part of all applied or specialized associate degree programs and of all certificate programs of an academic year or more in length. General education in degree programs shall be of collegiate level.

General Education. General education introduces students to the content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge - the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, mathematics, and the social sciences - and helps them develop the mental skills that will make them more effective learners. General education may, of course, be taught in different ways, and an institution must judge whether its students are better served by curricula or requirements that approach the disciplines through content and methodology, or that approach the disciplines by concentrating on outcomes. The rationale and plan for the general education requirements should be cooperatively developed by the faculty, administrative staff, and trustees, and the expected outcomes should be stated in relation to the institution's mission and goals.

## 2000 NASC Accreditation Report

### Policy 2.1. General Education/Related Instruction

The campus has identified in its own self-study a need to review and update the UAA general education program. This provides an opportunity to have a campus discussion about the philosophy, design, and delivery of the program. In its present configuration, the general education program includes offerings in the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences mathematics, and the social sciences; however, it is not clear if the program also includes courses that focus on the interrelationships among these major fields of study. A new general education requirements (GER) preamble was approved by the Faculty Senate in spring 2000. Consistently, the committee found faculty saying, "It's time for review."

At present, general education seems to be vested in "islands" with little interconnectedness. It is not clear how courses beyond the basic skills classes reinforce communication skills, technological literacy, library skills, and critical thinking. Also unclear is whether students understand and have communicated to them the purposes of the general education program and whether or not they see connections between and among classes. While some double counting of classes for general education and major requirements is allowed, it is prohibited for social sciences, humanities, and nursing majors. The College of Arts and Sciences has separate general education requirements, and these, too, should be reviewed, clarifying their rationale and logic.

Responsibility for the design, approval, and implementation of the curriculum is vested in the Undergraduate Academic Board (UAB) with general education specifically overseen by a sub-committee. To begin a review of general education, the sub-committee responsible should receive a charge to do so.

Assessment of general education has begun with the development of outcomes objectives and development of mission/purpose statements. A working group in fine arts, for instance, has developed a guide, *Fostering a Deeper Understanding of the Arts*, that can be shared with anyone teaching a Fine Arts GER class. The value in establishing Assessment and program review processes lies not only in determining whether goals of a course or curriculum have been met but in the bringing together of faculty to discuss common goals, share pedagogical approaches, and deepen their understanding of their own teaching.

Once a thorough review has been undertaken, regular and continuous Assessment of general education will help UAA meet the standard on Assessment. Designating a particular director or administrator to be responsible for this oversight could be helpful.

*The Committee recommends that the Faculty Senate formalize a review of general education requirements that addresses their rationale and plan. Input should be sought from the faculty, administrative staff, and other stakeholders throughout UAA. It is expected that the work on articulating and communicating general education's mission, goals, and objectives of general education will continue. (Standard 2, Policy 2.1)*

## Excerpts from

### University of Alaska Anchorage Progress Report Addressing General Education Requirements Recommendation 5 of the Evaluation Committee, October 2000 Submitted October 2002

Available at <http://edit.uaa.alaska.edu/accreditation/upload/Fall-2002-Progress-Report-on-General-Education-Requirements.doc>

A comparison of the proposed new GERs at UAA and the requirements of Policy 2.1 of the NASC Accreditation Handbook shows that they also paid close attention to the standards enforced by the Commission on Colleges and Universities (See Table 5.4 in the March Report).\*

\*Available at <http://edit.uaa.alaska.edu/accreditation/upload/GER-Subcommittee-Report.doc>

#### The GER Assessment Plan (GAP)

Building upon UAA's internal efforts with the Academic Outcomes Coordinating Council late-1990's reports on the GER and the NASC site team's recommendations, a GER Assessment Plan (GAP) has been developed and will begin implementation this academic year (AY 2002-2003). Operationalizing the GAP is the primary objective of the working groups, and for each of the nine GER preamble outcomes, the working groups will determine:

1. Measurable parameters for each outcome,
2. Linkage to the eight GER categories,
3. Performance standards and assessment criteria for each outcome and category,
4. Institutional practices and classroom activities that yield evidence of the outcome,
5. Assessment methods appropriate for each outcome and category,
6. Methods of gathering evidence of learning, and
7. Strategies for taking action on the analysis ("closing the loop").

As currently scheduled, all GER courses will be placed on a three-year initial review by the GER subcommittee of UAB, with systematic review to follow every five to seven years. The nine GER outcomes will be reviewed over a five-year cycle (two outcomes per year). Keeping in mind the assessment dictum of "multiple measures," the GAP provides ongoing assessment at the program, course, and student outcome levels and links program planning, course revision and student assessment to the nine GER preamble outcomes:

- *Student Outcomes* will be assessed through targeted course-based assessments and by cohort testing of GER outcomes via ACT's Collegiate Assessment of Academic Performance (CAAP) instrument (fall and spring).\*
- *Course Outcomes* will be assessed through targeted course-based assessments and curriculum review by the GER subcommittee and UAB.
- *Program Outcomes* will be assessed through the systematic and ongoing evaluation of student and course outcomes in the GER (as above) and evaluation of other internal (for example, Academic Unit Profiles and Office of Planning, Research, and Assessment student surveys) and external assessments (for example, the National Survey of Student Engagement).

\*This 2002 proposed assessment plan for the GER was replaced with the 2004 approval of the GER Integrative Capstone Model and GER Assessment Proposal (<http://governance2.uaa.alaska.edu/ger/integrativecapstone.pdf>)\*. The proposed 2006 GER assessment includes Tier 3: Integrative Capstone assessment of the GER preamble student outcomes and the assessment of student outcomes in Tier 1 and Tier 2 GER courses which are consistent with their category descriptor outcomes and the appropriate GER preamble student outcomes.

#### **\*1.2 Purpose of Integrative Capstone**

The purpose of the Integrated Capstone is to enrich the academic experience of students by: (1) enabling UAA students to become well-rounded, liberally educated people; (2) stimulating curricular innovation; (3) integrating GER Preamble Student Outcomes with GER content areas; and (4) facilitating general education assessment.

Excerpt from **Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities**  
**A REGULAR INTERIM REPORT University of Alaska Anchorage October 17-18, 2005**  
<http://edit.uaa.alaska.edu/accreditation/interimeval05.cfm> for all documents

The following is an excerpt from the “2005 Regular Interim Evaluation” link on the page above:  
<http://edit.uaa.alaska.edu/accreditation/upload/NWCCU%20Regular%20Interim%20Report%202005.pdf> .

Another important initiative the university has taken in response to recommendations from the earlier evaluation is the designation and establishment of general education requirements for the Bachelor Degree. The 2000 Decennial Report provided:

*The committee recommends the Faculty Senate formalize a review of general education requirements that addresses their rationale and plan. Input should be sought from the faculty, administrative staff, and other stakeholders throughout UAA. It is expected that the work on articulating and communicating general education’s mission, goals, and objectives of general education will continue.*

The effort to adopt these requirements was led by a Faculty Senate Committee and took almost two years. A favorable faculty vote occurred in 2004\*. The general education requirements and their subject distribution is included in the 2005-2006 Catalog and are effective with this fall’s entering class. While the list is, for the most part, standard to almost all universities, it does represent considerable exploration on the part of this faculty, and provides a clear pathway for students. The list will also ease the movement of students who so choose from the Associate Degree to the four-year program.

\*The five Faculty Senate GER motions are available at  
<http://govn.uaa.alaska.edu/uab/ger/oct21revisedgermotions.pdf#search=%22GER%20%2B%20Faculty%20Senate%22> .

The GER Integrative Capstone Proposal approved by the Faculty Senate and Provost in 2004 is available at  
<http://governance2.uaa.alaska.edu/ger/integrativecapstone.pdf> .

Excerpt from **University of Alaska Anchorage**  
**Report to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities**  
**Regular Interim Visit – Fall 2005**  
<http://edit.uaa.alaska.edu/accreditation/interimeval05.cfm> for all documents

The following is an excerpt from the “Full report in Adobe PDF” link on the page above:  
<http://edit.uaa.alaska.edu/accreditation/upload/NWCCU%20Regular%20Interim%20Report%202005.pdf> .

**Progress: Development and articulation of the mission, goals, and objectives of General Education**

The first step in this process was to involve a broad base of faculty in developing goals, objectives, and a timeline for a university-wide GER review. Following two years of workshops, presentations, and on-line discussions, the Faculty Senate adopted a set of five resolutions that established the minimum GER components, affirmed the primacy of faculty control, introduced an Integrative Capstone with application of skills across the disciplines, and separated basic skills and integration from other GER outcomes. Since 2003, efforts have been concentrated on further defining the Capstone requirement, linking definitions with learning outcomes, and articulating the mission, goals, and objectives of the GERs to faculty, staff, and students. Catalog copy was written and approved in 2004-05, and thus far nine courses have completed academic review for inclusion in the Integrative Capstone category. A dozen more courses are pending review. With the GER revision substantially complete, future efforts will concentrate on linking GER outcomes and assessments with disciplinary outcomes and assessments, refining assessment strategies for Basic Skills and the Associate of Arts degree, and developing advising materials to help students, faculty, and staff integrate GERs more effectively with other educational programs.