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## 43 Update: Final Senate Approved GER Course and Certificate Guidelines

University of Northern Iowa. General Education Re-envisioning Committee.

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# **Guidelines for Course Proposals**

## **New General Education Program**

**Approved by Faculty Senate 2-22-21**

*These guidelines are meant to provide an overview of each “category” in the approved new general education program’s structure (i.e., each “box”). These guidelines are intended for faculty and departments to consider as they prepare course proposals. The General Education Committee members will provide multiple “Request for Proposals” opportunities this year and next, and will also consider “revise and resubmit” options for courses and/or certificates that are deemed to not adequately meet the guidelines in their initial form. These guidelines are deliberately broad in order to be inclusive, with more detailed rubrics to be developed at a later time with input from faculty teaching in each learning area. Future efforts will also create clear and detailed messaging for students and external constituencies.*

### **General Guidelines for course submissions in each learning area:**

- All categories potentially include courses from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives
- Course proposal must show how course meets relevant outcome(s)
- Instructors must commit to including assignments in their course and submitting those artifacts to the assessment team.
- Courses may also count as major courses
- Courses cannot have prerequisites (ALEKS scores can be utilized for placement)
- Courses must be designed to include and be accessible for students in diverse majors, and not aimed at students in a particular major
- Departments must be willing and able to offer the course regularly
- Committee will consider experimental courses
- Committee may ask faculty to resubmit a course or certificate proposal if revisions are deemed necessary

## **Written Communication**

### **Guidelines for Course Proposal**

**Category description:** Courses in the written communication category should be designed to enhance foundational communication skills and habits of mind necessary for success at UNI and beyond. In addition to the process of reading, researching, writing, and revising, written communication courses will also enable students to develop critical thinking skills.

**Student Learning Outcomes to be addressed:**

**SLO 1 Critical Thinking** - “Engage in effective critical inquiry to address complex topics.” Critical inquiry can take different forms, depending on the instructor and discipline, but courses in this category will emphasize the thorough exploration of relevant issues, ideas, histories, artifacts, and theories before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. Students will also develop skills in collecting and analyzing evidence, including critical assessment of information sources.

**SLO 2 Writing** - “Write effectively.” Courses that fulfill this learning outcome must include regular writing assignments that require revision and reflection. Regardless of discipline, writing itself must be one of the emphases of the course, and the conventions of Standard writing English must be covered. The artifact for assessment will demonstrate the ability to write with clarity, focus, organization, and originality for a specific purpose and audience.

## **Oral Communication**

### **Guidelines for Course Proposal**

**Category description:** Courses in the oral communication category are designed to enhance foundational communication skills and knowledge necessary for success at UNI and beyond. Oral communication courses will also teach active listening, as well as how to engage in civil discourse, especially in diverse groups.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes to be addressed:**

**SLO 3 Speaking** - “Demonstrate competent listening and effective speaking skills in a variety of contexts.” To do this, courses in this category will

- give focused attention to and instruction on the skills needed to speak effectively in a variety of contexts.
  - offer at least four opportunities for formal oral presentations, one of which should be a group project;
  - give regular and consistent feedback on presentation skills
- Instruct students in the development of engaged and reflective listening skills

**SLO 5 Collaboration** - “Work with others across differences to achieve common goals.”

**SLO 6 Diversity and Commonality** - “Examine human diversity and commonality.”

Recognizing that working effectively across differences requires knowledge of how human differences and commonalities affect the ways in which communication occurs and how it is received, courses in this category will

- give focused attention to and instruction on how to communicate effectively in groups, including
  - awareness of the ethical responsibilities of communicators
  - effective group communication skills, so that students can learn and practice strategies for creating and maintaining successful communication in groups.
  - skills for engaging in civil discourse and intercultural communication

## **Quantitative Reasoning**

### **Guidelines for Course Proposal**

**Category description:** This category may potentially encompass any discipline that uses quantitative methods or formal logic, with an emphasis on courses that demonstrate how such methods can be used to explain reality and achieve meaning. Because these courses address both quantitative reasoning and critical thinking, they should locate mathematical skills and reasoning in a context of explaining or solving complex problems.

**Student Learning Outcomes to be addressed:**

**SLO 1 Critical Thinking** - “Engage in effective critical inquiry to address complex topics.”

**SLO 4 Quantitative** - “Frame and solve problems using quantitative reasoning.”

## **Human Condition (Domestic & Global)**

### **Guidelines for Course Proposal**

**Category description:** The aim of this category is to enlarge students' understanding of the many possible meanings of being human by urging them to branch out beyond their own specific background, and to enable them to think about their experience from that broadened perspective. This category will potentially include courses from a very wide range of disciplines. Students will take two courses from this category: one with a domestic or U.S. focus, and one with a global or international focus. Please specify which subcategory your course will fulfill.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes to be addressed:**

##### **SLO 6 Diversity & Commonality - "Examine human diversity and commonality"**

- This outcome can be addressed by emphasizing positive, neutral, or negative aspects of human diversity, difference, & commonality; for example:
  - The multiplicity and richness of human experience and practices, historically, culturally, etc.
  - Disparities or injustices related to race, class, gender, etc.
  - The commonality aspect of the outcome is intended to be broad, referring to those individual and social aspects of being human that are shared across historical, geographical, and cultural differences, and also to structures, practices, and institutions that may be shared within a specific human community.
- The concept of diversity refers to a very wide range of possible content. Courses could be designed broadly, to include such topics within a larger frame, or more narrowly, with a focus on such topics. The following are merely examples (not meant to be exclusive) of these topics:
  - The history of the Civil Rights Movement
  - Theories of sex & gender
  - Literature by underrepresented writers
  - Comparative religions
  - Influence of culture on various human experiences
  - Neurodiversity

##### **SLO 7 Human Condition - "Analyze ideas, works, or institutions as diverse conceptions of the human condition."** The focus is on analyzing what it means to be human. It includes:

- Findings and theories in the social sciences and humanities
- Works of art, literature, and philosophy
- Historical perspectives

## **Scientific Reasoning Guidelines for Course Proposal**

### **Brief category description:**

Scientists discern basic principles that explain natural phenomena through observation and analysis of the world. Scientists rely on theory and experimentation to test and refine understandings of our human minds and bodies, life on earth, and the physical universe.

Laboratory courses unite hands-on scientific experimentation, inductive reasoning, and deductive analysis with the study of basic principles, for example (but not limited to), the structure of matter, biological evolution, human behavior, and thermodynamics. A laboratory experience is expected to be part of the course (either 4-credit integrated course or 3-credit course plus a concurrent 1-credit lab).

After completing a course in this category, students will be able to critique claims using the tools of scientific inquiry.

### **Student Learning Outcomes to be addressed:**

**SLO 1 Critical Thinking** - “Engage in effective critical inquiry to address complex topics.”

**SLO 8 Scientific Reasoning** - “Critique claims using the tools of scientific inquiry.”

## **Human Expression**

### **Guidelines for Course Proposal**

**Category description:** A course in this category must include the creation as well as the analysis or interpretation of creative works in a medium relevant to the field or domain of the course. Creative work can include any artifact, concrete or ephemeral, newly created or a curation of work, in the arts. Courses should provide relevant instruction for creating and in analysis/interpretation, which culminates in assessed work for each skill. The work students create and that which they analyze/interpret should be related by general field of practice or medium.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes to be addressed:**

**SLO 9 Creativity** - “Engage in a creative process to produce artistic work,”

- The artifact for assessment of creative work should be a reflection on a student’s personal creative process and learning stemming from that process. Creative assignments can vary widely in medium including but not limited to drawing or painting, choreography or performance art, theatrical scene design or acting, music performance or musical curation, poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction.

**SLO 10 Artistic Meaning** - “Interpret creative works and ideas as expressions of meaning and purpose.”

- The analysis/interpretation artifact for assessment could center on one or more pieces from a body of work studied in the course or student work produced during the course. The goal is to practice analysis and interpretation. Students should demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the elements and principles of the medium they are analyzing/interpreting.

## **Responsibility Guidelines for Course Proposal**

### **Brief category description:**

Courses in the Responsibility category give students the opportunity to develop skills in ethical reasoning as well as a greater understanding of their personal responsibilities and their roles as citizens. The category aims to enable students to move beyond ideological reactions to questions that require careful normative judgment. It does not aim to inculcate in students a particular moral code, but to help them develop the habits of reasoning based on consistent principles, and judging based on evidence and logic, which they will need as citizens in charge of creating our shared world.

To qualify, a course would:

- Provide students with intellectual tools for reaching reasoned ethical or normative judgment. These tools are not limited to those developed by moral philosophers, but must go beyond the ethical codes of a particular profession.
- Prompt students to engage in self-reflection to develop deeper understandings of concepts and priorities that they may value in unexamined ways, such as freedom, patriotism, family, health, security, or fairness. (This list is far from comprehensive.)
- Apply normative reasoning to real world phenomena. Possible examples could include climate change, capitalism, family dynamics, migration, medical ethics, etc. (This list is far from comprehensive.)

### **Student Learning Outcomes to be addressed:**

**SLO 11 Values** - “Analyze the origins and consequences of one’s own personal values.”

**SLO 12 Ethics** - “Apply ethical reasoning to important issues facing society.”

## **Multi-disciplinary Certificate Guidelines for Certificate & Course Proposals**

**Description:** Certificates should bring liberal arts approaches to a topic that doesn't fall within a single discipline or domain. This tier is intended to convey to students that the world's complexity cannot be understood solely from the perspective of any one discipline, and that different approaches can complement one another to build more complete understanding. The certificates also give students a chance to further develop key skills of critical thinking, writing, and oral communication, in addition to two other SLOs (see below). Certificates are optional, but the 9-12 credits included within them are not. If a student opts not to take a certificate, they must take additional courses in the general education program.

### **Student Learning Outcomes to be addressed by all certificates:**

**SLO 1 Critical Thinking** - "Engage in effective critical inquiry to address complex topics."

**SLO 2 Writing** - "Write effectively."

**SLO 3 Speaking** - "Demonstrate competent listening and effective speaking skills in a variety of contexts."

### **Additional two SLOs to be chosen by faculty members developing the certificate:**

**SLO 4 Quantitative Reasoning** - "Frame and solve problems using quantitative reasoning."

**SLO 5 Collaboration** - "Work with others across differences to achieve shared goals."

**SLO 6 Diversity and Commonality** - "Examine human diversity and commonality."

**SLO 7 Human Condition** - "Analyze ideas, works, or institutions as diverse conceptions of the human condition."

**SLO 8 Scientific Reasoning** - "Critique claims using the tools of scientific inquiry."

**SLO 9 Creativity** - "Engage in a creative process to produce artistic work."

**SLO 10 Artistic Meaning** - "Interpret creative works and ideas as expressions of meaning and purpose."

**SLO 11 Values** - "Analyze the origins and consequences of one's own personal values."

**SLO 12 Ethics** - "Apply ethical reasoning to important issues facing society."

### **Requirements for each certificate:**

- Syllabi for all courses to be included must be submitted in the application process
- Experimental courses and/or newly revised courses will be considered
- A certificate may include 3 or 4 requirements (9-12 credits); see certificate structure guidelines below for more details on how certificates should be organized
- Classes must be submitted from multiple disciplines
- Certificate courses can also be included in the middle or “blue” Tier
- Certificates will not be required for students; they may choose to take additional credits from the general education program instead (to reach required total of 37)
- Course proposals must show how course meets relevant outcome(s)
- Instructors must commit to including assignments in their course and submitting those artifacts to the assessment team.
- Courses in the certificate may also count as major or minor courses if a department chooses
- Courses cannot have prerequisites
- Courses must be designed to include and be accessible for students in diverse majors, and not aimed at students in a particular major
- Departments must be willing and able to offer the course regularly
- Committee may ask faculty to resubmit a course or certificate proposal if revisions are deemed necessary

**Generic Example of a Theme:** A certificate on the theme of “Water” could include courses such as “The Symbol of Water in Religion and Culture,” “Images of Water in Literary Texts,” “Environmental Justice and the Politics of Water,” “Chemistry of Water,” “Water and Economic Development,” and many others. Beyond these sample courses, such a certificate could represent fields as diverse as public health, geography, physics, biology, and art.

### **GUIDELINES ON HOW TO STRUCTURE A CERTIFICATE:**

#### **Why is the certificate structure important?**

- Provides clear path for students to complete a certificate
- Allows realistic course/seat schedule planning from departments
- Clearly denotes what SLOs are addressed in what “box” for assessment purposes
- Allows feasible system programming in the Registrar’s Office for advisement reports, degree audits and transcripts

#### **General Guidelines:**

- Each certificate must address SLO 1 (Critical Thinking), SLO 2 (Writing), SLO 3 (Speaking), and at least 2 additional SLOs the faculty choose for the certificate.
- Each certificate must include classes from multiple disciplines.

- Each certificate must be able to schedule enough seats every semester within each “box” in order to meet student demand for the certificate and allow a timely path to graduation.
- No specific number of classes is required in each “box” within a certificate. It can range from a minimum of one course to a maximum of as many classes that would fit the theme and required SLOs of that “box.”

**A certificate proposal should include** *(in addition to the syllabi for each course):*

- The overall theme of the certificate (a name and brief description)
- How many classes are required in the certificate
- The structure of the certificate:
  - Which classes the students can choose from for each requirement or “box” in the certificate
  - Which SLOs a course must address in order to be included in a “box” within the certificate (courses may address more than these required SLOs, but they will not be assessed on them)

**EXAMPLES of STRUCTURE:**

**These generic examples are provided in order to help guide faculty and departments in the development of potential certificates. They are not meant to be exhaustive.**

- **Example 1:** 4 course certificate, with multiple classes available in each requirement box; provides choice for students, and also allows departments more flexibility in scheduling seats/sections from semester to semester
- **Example 2:** 3 course certificate, with only 5 classes included overall, with 1 required class that all students must take to complete the certificate; requires more seats/sections being offered of each class each semester when scheduling, but simpler to clearly connect the classes and to arrange across departments
- **Example 3:** 3 course certificate with multiple course options in each requirement box, allowing for each course to have fewer seats/sections scheduled each semester

**EXAMPLE 1 (4 class certificate, SLOs to be covered are 1, 2, 3, 7 & 11)**

**Certificate Theme XYZ**

<u>REQUIREMENT 1</u> SLO 1 & 3	<u>REQUIREMENT 2</u> SLO 2 & 11	<u>REQUIREMENT 3</u> SLO 1 & 7	<u>REQUIREMENT 4</u> SLO 1
<i>Choose 1:</i> Class A Class B Class C	<i>Choose 1:</i> Class D Class E Class F Class G	<i>Choose 1:</i> Class H Class I Class J Class K	<i>Choose 1:</i> Class L Class M

**EXAMPLE 2 (3 class certificate, SLOs to be covered are 1, 2, 3, 6 & 9)**

**Certificate Theme ABC**

<u>REQUIREMENT 1</u>	<u>REQUIREMENT 2</u>	<u>REQUIREMENT 3</u>
SLO 1	SLO 2 & 3	SLO 6 & 9
<i>Required:</i> Class A (offers high number of seats every semester to meet demand)	<i>Choose 1:</i> Class B Class C	<i>Choose 1:</i> Class D Class E

**EXAMPLE 3 (3 class certificate, SLOs to be covered are 1, 2, 3, 8 & 12)**

**Certificate Theme XXX**

<u>REQUIREMENT 1</u>	<u>REQUIREMENT 2</u>	<u>REQUIREMENT 3</u>
SLO 1 & 8	SLO 2 & 3	SLO 8 & 12
<i>Choose 1:</i> Class A Class B Class C	<i>Choose 1:</i> Class D Class E Class F Class G Class H	<i>Choose 1:</i> Class I Class J Class K Class L