



**The  
General  
Education  
Handbook**

# **The General Education Handbook**

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The purpose of the handbook is to familiarize the reader with the goals, philosophy and outcomes of General Education at Georgian College. It outlines the processes for curriculum review, as well as criteria for the development of new courses. The handbook is developed and approved by General Education faculty, and will ensure consistent practice as it relates to General Education.

## **General Education in College Curriculum**

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General Education courses are designed to complement students' vocational studies by addressing issues of importance to students' lives as individuals and members of society. The General Education Program strives to enhance the development of skills necessary for living and working in an increasingly complex, interdependent world. "General Education strengthens students' [essential] skills, such as critical analysis, problem-solving, and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and/or societal importance" (Ministry Guidelines, p.19). In addition, General Education provides students with the tools necessary to engage in lifelong learning. For further information, consult the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Framework for Programs of Instruction:

<http://www.accc.ca/ftp/es-ce/MTCUCollegeFramework.pdf>

## **General Education and Transferability**

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Transferability between programs and between institutions has been identified as a priority both within Georgian College and within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. General Education continues to provide opportunities for students, as General Education courses are transferable between programs, between colleges, and in some cases, from colleges to universities. The General Education department facilitates these opportunities for students, providing over 1000 exemptions and PLARs each semester for qualifying students, thus supporting and encouraging transferability and student success.

## **Structure and Content of the General Education Program**

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Program requirements at Georgian College include 3-6 General Education courses per program. Generally, 2-year programs have 3-4 General Education courses and 3-year programs have 5-6 General Education courses. It is recommended that one year certificate programs include at least one General Education course to allow flexibility for those students who choose to continue their studies beyond the certificate.

As college programs offer less choice in their vocational curricula, it is important that we recognize the value of providing students with the opportunity to choose some of their courses and to develop personal learning plans that reflect individual interests. As such, the General Education Program at Georgian College is committed to providing a breadth

of choice, with four categories that are reflective of the Ministry's General Education Policy Framework:

### **Arts and Humanities**

The Arts and Humanities are those areas of study which deal with global ideologies and the creative expression of human experience. Examples of subjects in the Arts and Humanities area are:

- Art
- Literature
- Music
- Language
- Religion
- Philosophy
- History

### **Social Sciences**

The Social Sciences are those areas of study which investigate, in a disciplined manner, the self, society, and institutions and cultural systems, as well as the interrelationships between them. Examples of subject areas within the Social Sciences are:

- Anthropology
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Political Science
- Economics

### **Science and Technology**

Science and Technology deal with the nature of the physical world and its principles which give rise to technological applications. Examples of subject areas in Science and Technology include:

- Physics
- Chemistry
- Technological Innovation
- Environmental Science

### **Civic Responsibilities and Personal Growth**

Courses in this area are intended to encourage greater self-awareness as well as an understanding of one's broader responsibilities as a citizen.

Examples of subject areas in Civic Responsibilities and Personal Growth include:

- Politics
- Social Welfare
- Rights and Freedoms
- Community Involvement

## **General Education Program Learning Outcomes**

Students are given a choice of a broad range of courses in General Education. Regardless of the particular set of courses selected, upon successful completion of the program, the students will have reliably demonstrated the ability to:

- critically reflect on topics and issues that are relevant to life in the modern world
- utilize historical, methodological, and theoretical perspectives at an introductory level in examining topics and issues
- use appropriate research and analytical skills to find and assess information relevant to a variety of topics and issues
- communicate the results of research clearly and coherently using a variety of media
- explore human issues from a variety of viewpoints, both individually and collaboratively
- examine issues, topics and themes occurring at the local, national, and global levels in a manner that demonstrates insight into, and is respectful of, diversity
- explore interconnections between topics and themes relevant to modern life and the student's personal life, such as rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, or significant ethical issues and their implications

## **Guidelines for Evaluation in General Education Courses**

Ministry guidelines for General Education promote the development of “knowledge, skill and attitudinal outcomes that enable learners to meet more effectively the societal challenges which they face in their community, family, and working life,” (Curriculum Handbook, 2006, p. 12). It is important that the evaluation methods and weights allow for the use of multiple and varied assessment techniques that measure several levels of learning.

## **Criteria for Georgian College General Education Courses**

Courses for the General Education Program must meet the criteria listed below.

General Education courses will:

- be disciplinary, multidisciplinary, or topical courses from the General Education categories with foundational courses offered to first year students
- develop one or more of the goals of General Education as specified by Georgian College's General Education Policy and Ministry guidelines
- complement and balance vocational courses in the curriculum while maintaining a broad focus beyond that of any particular vocational curriculum. In cases where the course contains applied skills based learning outcomes, those learning outcomes will not exceed 30% of the total learning outcomes
- introduce and provide opportunities for students to reflect critically on the underlying assumptions embedded in the methodologies, history, language, themes, topics, and issues of the content or discipline areas
- foster knowledge, skills, and attitudes with respect to information literacy, critical thinking, and clear and coherent communication of ideas
- cultivate respect for a diversity of viewpoints on issues
- enable students to examine the relevance of topics and issues to their own lives

## **Criteria for New Course Development**

New courses in General Education will:

- be developed at the request of the Dean responsible for General Education
- be developed through collaboration with General Education curriculum representatives (C3R Committee)
- add to the breadth of General Education course offerings and will not overlap with current courses offered in the General Education Program
- reflect an area of expertise that can be taught by faculty members within the General Education Department/Portfolio, or faculty hired to teach within the General Education Department
- contribute to a balance amongst the four broad categories represented within the General Education Department
- present opportunities for a diversity of delivery modes and instructional approaches

## **New General Education Courses for Ontario Learn**

- All General Education courses for Ontario Learn will meet the criteria listed for all General Education courses, and must go through the prescribed approval process for new courses, as identified in this document.
- Ontario Learn, General Education courses, will be developed as assigned by the Dean responsible for General Education, in collaboration with the C3R Committee.
- Ontario Learn courses will be developed by faculty within the General Education department, or by faculty hired for the purposes of developing General Education courses for Ontario Learn.
- Courses for Ontario Learn will be developed according to provincial demand, and need not meet requirements for contributing to the balance of Georgian College's General Education offerings.

## **Approval Process for General Education Courses**

In order to be approved, courses must proceed through the following committees, in the following order:

1. The C3R Committee

This committee (Curriculum Review, Revision, and Renewal) comprises faculty members who teach General Education courses, appointed to the committee by the Dean responsible for General Education. The committee meets regularly to collaborate with faculty in the review and creation of General Education courses. The C3R Committee will bring approved courses forward to the General Education Committee.

2. General Education Committee

This committee comprises all faculty who teach General Education courses at Georgian College. Courses must be approved by this committee before advancing to the Macro Curriculum Committee.

3. Macro Curriculum Committee

Representatives from the broader portfolio are selected to sit on this committee. Courses that meet approval by the Macro Curriculum Committee will be forwarded to the Registrar's Office and be considered official General Education courses at Georgian College.

## **Guidelines for the General Education Course Review Process**

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### **Rationale**

Given that these courses are delivered across all postsecondary programs at several campuses, by a variety of faculty, both full-time and non full-time, it is important to ensure that the Gen Ed curriculum is kept current.

### **Principles**

1. Every academic year the C3R, through consultation with committee members, identifies courses to be reviewed. Criteria for prioritizing courses for review may include:
  - The course is identified by faculty as requiring revision or renewal
  - The course has not been reviewed for some time
  - The faculty member identifies that the course regularly has below average enrolment or success rates
2. Courses selected for review will then go through the approval process described in this document. In all cases, best efforts will be made by the C3R committee to ensure inclusion and collaboration with faculty who are teaching the course. Ideally, faculty will drive and support the process to ensure all General Education courses are current, relevant and fulfill the standards laid out in this Handbook.

## **Mandate of the General Education Committee**

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### **Membership**

1. All full-time and non-full-time faculty teaching General Education courses at all campuses of Georgian College.
2. Chair to be selected from amongst the membership, and approved by the Dean.

### **Responsibilities**

1. Meet at least three times per term (excluding summer).
2. Determine and monitor an annual program plan, to include such items as:
  - a. identification of both short and long term goals and responsibilities
  - b. implementation of curriculum recommendations
  - c. monitoring of program delivery
  - d. collection of program data for assessment
  - e. enhancement of ancillary supports (e.g., Library collections).

3. Ensure that courses available within the General Education Program are:
  - a. reflective of the General Education philosophy of Georgian College
  - b. responsive to students and the current General Education needs of post-secondary level college programs (including needs and expectations arising from program articulation agreements);
  - c. in conformity with the standards established within the General Education Program.
4. Initiate and monitor an annual informal review of General Education courses – to include feedback from lead teachers and teachers of each course offered in a given term regarding the adequacy of the course outline and delivery options.
5. Endorse new and revised General Education courses in a timely fashion for approval by the Macro Curriculum Committee.
6. Ensure quality publications of information regarding General Education.
7. Initiate, monitor, and review annual data collection on student satisfaction and student course preferences.
8. Recommend to the General Education coordinator the next year's course offerings in a timely fashion that meets the requirements of the College's annual academic planning schedule.
9. Provide leadership and resources to all faculty to maintain the quality of teaching and learning in General Education courses. Examples might include sharing best practices in course design, delivery, and assessment, discussing academic issues and practices which affect students and teachers in the classroom environment.



## Appendix A: Checklist for Reviewing, Revising, and Renewing a Course

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Course title: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 1: Identify the Need for a Review or Revision of an Existing Course

	Yes	No
Does the C3R support reviewing or revising the outline?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Could the need for improvement be accomplished by adjusting teaching and learning strategies or modifying the course syllabus?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you consulted with		
• other faculty teaching the course?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• the GNED Committee?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you explored the opportunity for alternative modes of delivery?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the Dean support a proposal for alternative delivery modes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Step 2: Determine Type and Impact of Change

	Yes	No
Are you contemplating a change to		
Non-basic elements:		
• evaluation categories and weightings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• editorial adjustments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic course elements:		
• description?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• title?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• significant change to the learning outcomes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (not specified above)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explain: _____		
If the proposed changes are significant (greater than 25% of the course content or significant changes to basic elements), will there be enough time to meet the deadlines? Consult the Macro Curriculum Chair.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Step 3: Determine Feasibility

	Yes	No
Has the Dean been informed of the extra costs that will be incurred if a non-full-time faculty member is involved in revising the course?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Appendix B: Checklist for Measuring the Effectiveness of General Education Course Outcomes

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		Outcome 1		Outcome 2		Outcome 3		Outcome 4		Outcome 5	
<b>Structure / Form</b>		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	The outcome describes a skill learners would be expected to achieve by the end of the course.										
2.	The outcome includes all three parts: verb, context, and connection to measurable learning.										
3.	The outcome is clear, concise, and specific.										
4.	The outcome begins with one verb. Where two are a possibility, use the higher order verb.										
5.	The order of the outcomes moves the students toward higher levels of learning.										
<b>Intention / Meaningfulness</b>											
6.	The outcome is purposeful and achievable.										
7.	The outcomes meaningfully connect the discipline with the “rest of life” for the average student/person (i.e. So what?)										
8.	The outcomes reflect the General Education program learning outcomes.										
<b>Connection to Assessment</b>											
9.	The outcome clearly describes performance expectations.										
10.	The performance expectations are observable and measurable.										
11.	The outcome is achievable given learning conditions such as time, support, skills, etc.										
12.	Each outcome applies to a number of course content areas.										
13.	The performance expectations can be measured using a variety of teaching and assessment methods.										

## Appendix C: Checklist for Writing General Education Course Outlines

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<b>Course Title</b>		Yes	No
1.	Title is no more than 30 characters including spaces		
2.	If title is longer than 30 characters, a preferred short title is included (no longer than 30 characters including spaces)		
<b>Course Description</b>		Yes	No
3.	Course description is 75 words or less		
4.	Description focuses on what students do in the course		
5.	Description is written in the present tense		
6.	Learning outcomes/assessments are not included in the description		
7.	Acronyms appear only after the term has been written in full with acronym in brackets		
8.	Description does not begin with "This course provides..." Courses can't "do" anything		
9.	"Students" is the preferred term (as opposed to the learner, the student, individuals, etc.)		
<b>Course Content</b>			
10.	Content areas relate to the course outcomes		
11.	Content provides guidance and consistency across multiple sections, but is not so prescriptive as to limit delivery styles and material choice		
12.	Content is limited to approximately 5-8 points. (If there is a need for excess, consolidate items where possible.)		
<b>Evaluation</b>			
13.	Evaluation methods and weights provide opportunities for assessing several levels of learning		
14.	At least two categories of evaluation are included (e.g. Presentations 30%; Assignments 70%)		
15.	The weighting in any one category does not exceed 75% of the final mark		
16.	Where a weighting category value exceeds 30%, more than one instance of the activity occurs (excluding exams). The evaluation method is written in the plural (e.g. Assignments 60%)		
17.	To indicate that an evaluation method can occur once or multiple times, an "s" in parentheses has been added (e.g. Test(s) 20%)		

## Appendix D:

### Course Revision Guide

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#### 1. Put the Course in Context

Think about the learners and the subject matter in terms of real-life context.

Think about the relationship between the subject matter and the goals of General Education.

#### 2. Create Outcomes

Focus on using the content in authentic ways rather than on requiring that learners simply master the subject matter.

Develop 4 to 6 outcome statements that reflect the context of the course and are appropriate to the *intended* level of the course.

Integrate at least 3 of the General Education Learning Outcomes.

Focus on the end goals for the course, rather than on the *process* (i.e., ends rather than means).

Design *measurable* outcome statements that apply across as many areas of content as possible.

#### 3. Determine Appropriate Assessment Strategies

Consider how skills can be developed and which active learning or formative assessment strategies would be appropriate.

Develop assessment tasks that effectively measure students' achievements of the outcomes.

#### 4. Build in Skills and Content

Determine the appropriate order for presenting the content (regardless of that used in the textbook).

Determine concepts and issues that will lead students to achievement of the outcomes.

Determine the tasks that will lead students to achievement of the learning outcomes.

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