



## Outcomes and Criteria for Transferable General Education Courses in Oregon

APPROVED BY THE JOINT BOARDS' ARTICULATION COMMITTEE ON NOVEMBER 9, 2009  
APPROVED BY THE COUNCILS OF THE CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICERS AND PROVOSTS ON  
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APPROVED BY UNIFIED EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE ON NOVEMBER 23, 2009

### BACKGROUND

This work was inspired by the need to identify the fundamental principles that shape General Education in colleges and universities throughout Oregon. The intent was to use the principles in two ways: (1) to create a rational basis for determining the equivalency of courses intended to transfer; and (2) to enhance General Education throughout Oregon by encouraging direct dialog among faculty in each of the disciplines within this rich curriculum. We recognized that these goals were ambitious, but we were optimistic because of the collegial attention that had already been given to General Education in Oregon. Creation of the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree in the late 1980s was possible because of our shared vision of the key disciplinary elements of General Education and, in 2005, the same spirit generated the Oregon Transfer Module (OTM). Our common understanding of the importance and overall purpose of General Education was articulated by the OUS Provosts' Council and endorsed by the Community Colleges' Council of Instructional Administrators in Fall 2004.

### *The Purpose of General Education*

*The education of undergraduate students is an essential activity of all Oregon colleges and universities. While undergraduate education needs to provide discipline-specific knowledge and skills through concentrated work in an academic major, it must also help students develop the habits of mind that lead to thoughtful and productive global citizenship. All parts of a well-designed education encourage these habits, but an effective General Education curriculum has this as its explicit goal. To this end, it seeks to promote:*

- *The capacity for analytical thinking and problem solving;*
- *The ability to communicate effectively, including listening, observing, speaking, and writing;*
- *An understanding of the natural world and the role of humans in it;*
- *An appreciation of the arts and humanities and the richness of human experience and expression;*
- *An awareness of multiple perspectives and the importance of diversity;*

- *A sense of societal responsibility, community service, and global citizenship; and*
- *The ability to develop a sense of direction, with the self-discipline needed for the ethical pursuit of a purposeful life.*

### **What was the problem?**

Although colleges and universities in Oregon embrace the value of General Education, most have developed their own unique philosophies and curricula that support these ideals. These varied curricula are a valuable resource for Oregon students, but the underlying mechanics are complicated sets of course and credit specifications. Emphasis on these details can reduce this coursework to a mere check-list of requirements and fail to communicate the opportunities for delight and discovery it offers. Moreover, when students transfer, General Education credits may be “lost” because of incompatibilities among variant curricula – leading to understandable frustration in the face of seemingly arbitrary decisions.

### **What did we do about it?**

As educators, we knew we had the responsibility for improving matters. While General Education curricula depend on course and credit requirements to shape the intellectual experiences we desire for students, we know that a variety of structures can promote the qualities we’re after. Thinking through the genetic underpinnings of cancer promotes analytical thinking, but so does dissecting the religious and cultural influences in 7<sup>th</sup> century Spain.

The Joint Boards Articulation Commission (JBAC) believed that what was needed was a collaboratively-developed framework within which to consider specific General Education courses. The framework would consist of two elements: (1) the broad outcomes we desire for students who take these courses and (2) the criteria for courses likely to achieve those outcomes. In addition to smoothing transfer, such a model had the potential to strengthen General Education in fundamental ways. By adhering to general principles rather than a rigid template, faculty would have the freedom to design General Education courses that exploit individual expertise and new insights. Students would benefit from faculty innovation in the classroom, while retaining assurance of the transferability of their coursework. Beginning in February 2006, JBAC led the effort to create this framework through the steps outlined below.

### **What results do we anticipate?**

**Short-term:** A clear statement of the intended learning outcomes of a General Education curriculum, regardless of its particular design, will help all of us communicate the key role of General Education – to students, parents, and Oregon citizens. The definition of criteria for effective General Education courses will be immediately helpful to faculty as they improve existing General Education courses and design new ones.

**Long-term:** We hope that the criteria for effective General Education courses will form the basis of a new, faculty-led procedure for making thoughtful decisions about General Education

coursework. At present, equivalency decisions can appear arbitrary because they are made according to local campus guidelines that are not widely known. In the new system, transferability will not depend on identity of course numbering or content, but on more general characteristics that can be shared by courses on diverse topics. Perhaps most important, we hope that the new system will foster a culture of substantive curricular discussions among faculty from diverse institutions. The collegiality of such groups was demonstrated during the creation of these Outcomes and Criteria statements and we think their combination of disciplinary expertise and direct classroom experience is powerful. They are in the best position to communicate the nature of college-level work in their areas and to stimulate interest in high quality General Education for students throughout Oregon.

### **Timeline for Creating General Education Outcomes and Criteria**

February and April 2006:	Statements drafted by disciplinary faculty groups
May – August 2006:	Informal comment on draft statements via the JBAC website
Fall 2006 – Fall 2007:	Discussion of draft statements on all community college and OUS campuses <i>Campus leaders collaborated with JBAC members to organize these discussions and encourage participation by faculty in the disciplines.</i>
Fall 2006 – Fall 2007:	Feedback from campus discussions collected by JBAC <i>Feedback from most community colleges and OUS campuses was collected and organized by JBAC.</i>
Fall 2007 – Fall 2008:	Feedback organized and revision process overseen by K. Sprague (on behalf of JBAC)
Winter 2008:	Feedback returned to Writing faculty committee for consideration <i>Feedback on the writing statements was the first to be organized and distributed to the original faculty drafters, many of whom were members of OWEAC (Oregon Writing and English Advisory Committee). OWEAC took the lead in responding to feedback and providing the final version of the statements.</i>
Winter 2009:	Feedback returned to other faculty committees (Speech, Mathematics, Arts & Letters, Social Science, Science/Computer Science) for consideration
Spring/Summer 2009:	Consensus on final versions of statements reached in each area
Fall 2009:	Review of final statements by JBAC, OUS Provosts, and CIA
Fall/Winter 2009:	Adoption of statements by the Joint Boards of Education and Higher Education
After Fall/Winter 2009 Adoption:	Application of outcomes and criteria

*Recommendation to the Joint Boards:*

The Joint Boards Articulation Committee, with the endorsement of the Community Colleges Councils of Chief Academic Officers and Instructional Administrators, the OUS Provosts' Council, and the Joint Boards of Education's Unified Education Enterprise Committee, recommend that the Joint Boards of Education approve the proposed General Education Outcomes and Criteria as presented below.

**(Board action required.)**

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# Arts & Letters

## OUTCOMES

As a result of taking General Education Arts & Letters\* courses, a student should be able to:

- Interpret and engage in the Arts & Letters, making use of the creative process to enrich the quality of life; and
- Critically analyze values and ethics within a range of human experience and expression to engage more fully in local and global issues.

\* *“Arts & Letters” refers to works of art, whether written, crafted, designed, or performed and documents of historical or cultural significance.*

## CRITERIA

A course in Arts & Letters should:

- 1) Introduce the fundamental ideas and practices of the discipline and allow students to apply them.
- 2) Elicit analytical and critical responses to historical and/or cultural works, such as literature, music, language, philosophy, religion, and the visual and performing arts.
- 3) Explore the conventions and techniques of significant forms of human expression.
- 4) Place the discipline in a historical and cultural context and demonstrate its relationship with other discipline.
- 5) Each course should also do at least one of the following:
  - Foster creative individual expression *via* analysis, synthesis, and critical evaluation;
  - Compare/contrast attitudes and values of specific historical periods or world cultures; and
  - Examine the origins and influences of ethical or aesthetic traditions.

# Cultural Literacy

*Cultural Literacy outcomes will be included in courses that meet the outcomes and criteria of a Discipline Studies requirement.*

## OUTCOMES

As a result of taking a designated Cultural Literacy course, learners would be able to:

- Identify and analyze complex practices, values, and beliefs and the culturally and historically defined meanings of difference.

## CRITERIA

A course with the Cultural Literacy designation will:

- 1) Explore how culturally-based assumptions influence perceptions, behaviors, and policies.
- 2) Examine the historical bases and evolution of diverse cultural ideas, behaviors, and issues.

Each course *may* also do one or more of the following:

- Critically examine the impact of cultural filters on social interaction so as to encourage sensitivity and empathy toward people with different values or beliefs.
- Investigate how discrimination arises from culturally defined meanings attributed to difference.
- Analyze how social institutions perpetuate systems of privilege and discrimination.
- Explore social constructs in terms of power relationships.

# Mathematics

## OUTCOMES

As a result of taking General Education Mathematics courses, a student should be able to:

- Use appropriate mathematics to solve problems; and
- Recognize which mathematical concepts are applicable to a scenario, apply appropriate mathematics and technology in its analysis, and then accurately interpret, validate, and communicate the results.

## CRITERIA

A collegiate level Mathematics course should require students to:

- 1) Use the tools of arithmetic and algebra to work with more complex mathematical concepts.
- 2) Design and follow a multi-step mathematical process through to a logical conclusion and judge the reasonableness of the results.
- 3) Create mathematical models, analyze these models, and, when appropriate, find and interpret solutions.
- 4) Compare a variety of mathematical tools, including technology, to determine an effective method of analysis.
- 5) Analyze and communicate both problems and solutions in ways that are useful to themselves and to others.
- 6) Use mathematical terminology, notation and symbolic processes appropriately and correctly.
- 7) Make mathematical connections to, and solve problems from, other disciplines.

# Science or Computer Science

## OUTCOMES

As a result of taking General Education Science or Computer Science courses, a student should be able to:

- Gather, comprehend, and communicate scientific and technical information in order to explore ideas, models, and solutions and generate further questions;
- Apply scientific and technical modes of inquiry, individually, and collaboratively, to critically evaluate existing or alternative explanations, solve problems, and make evidence-based decisions in an ethical manner; and
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of scientific studies and critically examine the influence of scientific and technical knowledge on human society and the environment.

## CRITERIA

A General Education course in either Science or Computer Science should:

- 1) Analyze the development, scope, and limitations of fundamental scientific concepts, models, theories, and methods.
- 2) Engage students in problem-solving and investigation, through the application of scientific and mathematical methods and concepts, and by using evidence to create and test models and draw conclusions. The goal should be to develop analytical thinking that includes evaluation, synthesis, and creative insight.
- 3) Examine relationships with other subject areas, including the ethical application of science in human society and the relevance of science to everyday life.

**In addition,**

A General Education course in Science should:

- Engage students in collaborative, hands-on and/or real-life activities that develop scientific reasoning and the capacity to apply mathematics and that allow students to experience the exhilaration of discovery;

**and**

A General Education course in Computer Science should:

- Engage students in the design of algorithms and computer programs that solve problems.



# Social Science

## OUTCOMES

As a result of taking General Education Social Science courses, a student should be able to:

- Apply analytical skills to social phenomena in order to understand human behavior; and
- Apply knowledge and experience to foster personal growth and better appreciate the diverse social world in which we live.

## CRITERIA

An introductory course in the Social Sciences should be broad in scope. Courses may focus on specialized or interdisciplinary subjects, but there must be substantial course content locating the subject in the broader context of the discipline(s). Approved courses will help students to:

- 1) Understand the role of individuals and institutions within the context of society.
- 2) Assess different theories and concepts and understand the distinctions between empirical and other methods of inquiry.
- 3) Utilize appropriate information literacy skills in written and oral communication.
- 4) Understand the diversity of human experience and thought, individually and collectively.
- 5) Apply knowledge and skills to contemporary problems and issues.

# Speech/Oral Communication

## OUTCOMES

As a result of taking General Education Speech/Oral Communication courses, a student should be able to:

- Engage in ethical communication processes that accomplish goals;
- Respond to the needs of diverse audiences and contexts; and
- Build and manage relationships.

## CRITERIA

A course in Speech/Oral Communication should provide:

- 1) Instruction in fundamental communication theories.
- 2) Instruction and practice of appropriate oral communication techniques.
- 3) Instruction and practice in the listening process.
- 4) Instruction and practice in comprehension, interpretation, and critical evaluation of communication.
- 5) Instruction and practice in adapting verbal and non-verbal messages for the listener and communication contexts.
- 6) Instruction in the responsibilities of ethical communicators.
- 7) Instruction in the value and consequences of effective communication.

# Writing

## OUTCOMES

As a result of completing the General Education Writing sequence, a student should be able to:

- Read actively, think critically, and write purposefully and capably for academic and, in some cases, professional audiences;
- Locate, evaluate, and ethically utilize information to communicate effectively; and
- Demonstrate appropriate reasoning in response to complex issues.

## CRITERIA

A course in Writing should:

- 1) Create a learning environment that fosters respectful and free exchange of ideas.
- 2) Include college-level readings that challenge students and require the analysis of complex ideas.
- 3) Provide guided discussion and model practices that help students listen to, reflect upon, and respond to others' ideas.
- 4) Foster students' ability to summarize and respond in writing to ideas generated by reading and discussion.
- 5) Require a substantial amount of formal and informal writing.
- 6) Emphasize writing as a recursive process of productive revision that results in complete, polished texts appropriate to audience needs and rhetorical situations.
- 7) Foreground the importance of focus, organization, and logical development of written work.
- 8) Guide students to reflect on their own writing, to provide feedback on peers' drafts, and to respond to peer and instructor comments.
- 9) Direct students to craft clear sentences and to recognize and apply the conventions of Edited Standard Written English.
- 10) Provide students with practice summarizing, paraphrasing, analyzing, synthesizing, and citing sources using a conventional documentation system.
- 11) Require appropriate technologies in the service of writing and learning.

*Information Literacy outcomes and criteria will be embedded in the Writing Foundational Requirements courses.*

# Information Literacy

*Information Literacy outcomes and criteria will be embedded in the Writing Foundational Requirements courses.*

## OUTCOMES

As a result of taking General Education Writing courses infused with Information Literacy, a student who successfully completes should be able to:

- Formulate a problem statement;
- Determine the nature and extent of the information needed to address the problem;
- Access relevant information effectively and efficiently;
- Evaluate information and its source critically; and
- Understand many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information.

## CRITERIA

A Writing course infused with Information Literacy should include:

- 1) Instruction and practice in identifying gaps in knowledge and recognizing when information is needed.
- 2) Instruction and practice in finding information efficiently and effectively, using appropriate research tools and search strategies.
- 3) Instruction and practice in evaluating and selecting information using appropriate criteria.
- 4) Instruction and practice in research strategies that are recursive and involve multiple stages such as modification of the original strategy and revision of the topic.
- 5) Instruction and practice in the ethical and legal use of information and information technologies.
- 6) Instruction and practice in creating, producing, and communicating understanding of a subject through synthesis of relevant information.

**The Outcomes and Criteria statements in Arts & Letters were developed from 2007-2009 by:**

Susan Agre-Kippenhan	Art	Portland State University
Barbara Altmann	Romance Languages	University of Oregon
Nia Bauer	Arts & Letters	Umpqua Community College
Nora Brodnicki	Arts & Letters	Clackamas Community College
Liz Charman	Art	Portland State University
Simeon Dreyfuss	Liberal Arts	Marylhurst University
Fredna Grimland	Music	Southern Oregon University
Gerd Horten	History	Concordia University
Robert Rodger	Arts & Letters	Klamath Community College
Florence Sage	Arts & Letters	Clatsop Community College
Diane Tarter	Creative Arts	Western Oregon University
Verne Underwood	Arts & Letters	Rogue Community College
Donald Wolfe	Arts & Letters	Eastern Oregon University

**The Outcomes and Criteria statements in Mathematics were developed from 2007-2009 by:**

Mariah Beck	Math	Umpqua Community College
Janet Brougher	Math	Rogue Community College
Ben Cornelius	Math	Oregon Institute of Technology
Tom Dick	Math	Oregon State University
Phyllis Leonard	Math	Chemeketa Community College
Neal Ninteman	Math	George Fox University
Jeanette Palmiter	Math	Portland State University
Julie Rowland	Math	Concordia University
Hal Sadofsky	Math	University of Oregon
Linda Samek	Math & Education	Corban College
Michael Ward	Math	Western Oregon University
Renaue Weber	Math	Treasure Valley Community College
Jim Whittaker	Math	Blue Mountain Community College

**The Outcomes and Criteria statements in Science/Computer Science were developed from 2007-2009 by:**

Linda Anderson	Computer Science	Clackamas Community College
Bill Becker	Science Ed. Chair	Portland State University
Kendra Cawley	Biological Science	Portland Community College
Lonnie Guralnick	Natural Sciences	Western Oregon University
Robert Kovacich	Chemistry	Columbia Gorge Community College
Elizabeth Lundy	Mathematics	Linn-Benton Community College
Scott MacDonald	Zoology	Oregon Coast Community College
Catherine Otto	Science/Computing	Oregon Institute of Technology
Don Powers	Biology	George Fox University
Cynthia Prentice-Craver	Life Science	Chemeketa Community College
Molly Shor	Computer Science	Oregon State University
Davison Soper	Physics	University of Oregon

**The Outcomes and Criteria statements in Social Science were developed from 2007-2009 by:**

Deborah Baumgold	Political Science	University of Oregon
Michael Bollenbaugh	Arts & Sciences	Northwest Christian College
Sheila Broderick	Social Science	Lane Community College
Tom Carroll	Social Science	Central Oregon Community College
Stephanie Cram	Social Science	Mt. Hood Community College
Darci Dance	Psychology	Linn-Benton Community College
Jeff Dense	Political Science	Eastern Oregon University
Leo Dubray	Humanities & Social Sciences	Oregon Institute of Technology
Dan Rubenson	Economics	Southern Oregon University
Patty Scott	Social Science	Southwestern Oregon Community College
Richard White	Urban Studies & Planning	Portland State University

**The Outcomes and Criteria statements in Speech/Oral Communications were developed from 2007-2009 by:**

Don Asay	Speech/Writing	Treasure Valley Community College
Jon Bouknight	Speech	Central Oregon Community College
Kevin Brown	Communication	Oregon Institute of Technology
April Curtis	Oral Communication	Eastern Oregon University
John Griffith	Physics	Linn-Benton Community College
Bernadette Kapocias	Speech	Southwestern Oregon Community College
Alena Ruggerio	Communication	Southern Oregon University
Jeff Sweeney	Communication	Marylhurst University
Nancy Wendt	Speech	Oregon State University
Doris Werkman	Speech	Portland Community College

**The Outcomes and Criteria statements in Writing were developed from 2007-2009 by the membership of the Oregon Writing and English Advisory Council and:**

Pauline Beard	English	Pacific University
Lynda Bennett	Writing	Blue Mountain Community College
Fred Bennett	Writing	Tillamook Bay Community College
Julie Brown	Writing	Clatsop Community College
Vicki Tolar Burton	Intensive Writing	Oregon State University
John Gage	English	University of Oregon
Carol Harding	Humanities/English	Western Oregon University
Greg Jacob	English	Portland State University
Nancy Knowles	Writing	Eastern Oregon University
James Nystrom	Writing	Mt. Hood Community College
Eva Payne	Writing	Chemeketa Community College
Laura Young	University Seminar	Southern Oregon University
Kate Sullivan	Literature & Comm.	Lane Community College
Carol Burnell	English	Clackamas Community College
Mada Morgan	University Seminar	Southern Oregon University
Jill Rupert	English	Chemeketa Community College

**The Outcomes and Criteria statements in Cultural Literacy were developed from 2008-2009 by:**

Amy Harper	Anthropology	Central Oregon Community College
Andrew Cohen	Writing	Portland Community College
Angela Dahlin	English	Treasure Valley Community College
Barbara Bessey	Facilitator	Linn-Benton Community College
Callie Palmer	English/Writing	Linn-Benton Community College
Kevin McCarthy	Assoc. V.P. Instruction	Blue Mountain Community College
Darci Dance	Psychology	Linn-Benton Community College
David Wright	Literature & Comp.	Mt. Hood Community College
Doug Radke	Speech	Blue Mountain Community College
Ed DeGrauw	Biology	Portland Community College
Emery Smith	Social Science	Umpqua Community College
Eriks Puris	Geology	Portland Community College
Gerry Hampshire	Social Science	Treasure Valley Community College
James Harrison	History & Humanities	Portland Community College
Javier Ayala	Dean-Curr. & Inst.	Umpqua Community College
John Sadusky	History	Tillamook Bay Community College
Keely Baca	Anthropology	Tillamook Bay Community College
Larkin Franks	V.P. of Instruction	Mt. Hood Community College
Loretta Goldy	History	Portland Community College
Maria Wilson-Figuero	Sociology	Portland Community College
Marlene Eid	Psychology	Portland Community College
Mary Brau	Curriculum	Lane Community College
Maureen McGlynn	Assoc. Dean-Curr. & Inst.	Chemeketa Community College
Melissa Johnson	Women's Studies	Chemeketa Community College
Nicole Bragg	Psychology	Mt. Hood Community College
Patricia Semura	Speech	Portland Community College
Patricia Antoine	Sociology	Chemeketa Community College
Patricia O'Neill	History	Central Oregon Community College
Mark Harris	Counseling	Lane Community College
Susie Cousar	Health & P.E.	Lane Community College
Kendra Cawley	Dean-Inst. Support	Portland Community College
Susan Lewis	Inst. Coordinator	Columbia Gorge Community College

**The Outcomes and Criteria statements in Information Literacy were developed from 2007-2009 by:**

Natalie Beach	Library and Tutoring	Chemeketa Community College
Michelle Burke	Reference Librarian	Chemeketa Community College
Randall Collver	Resource Center	Clatsop Community College
Katherine Cunnion	Reference Librarian	Umpqua Community College
Allie Flannery	Faculty Librarian	Portland Community College
Anna Johnson	Faculty Librarian	Mt. Hood Community College
Karen Halliday	Reference & Inst. Librarian	Clackamas Community College
Richenda Hawkins Wilkinson	Inst. Serv. Librarian	Linn-Benton Community College
Tina Hovekamp	Public Serv.-Assoc. Prof.	Central Oregon Community College
Jennifer Johnston	Writing Instructor	Portland Community College
Doyle Mraz	Writing	Rogue Community College and SOU
Maureen Phillips	Communications	Oregon Institute of Technology
Marika Pineda	Librarian	Lane Community College
Jacquelyn Ray	Librarian	Lane Community College
Greg Rathert	English	Linn- Benton Community College
Claire Rivers	Reference Librarian	Portland Community College
Tracy Sharn	Public Serv. Librarian	Columbia Gorge Community College
Robin Shapiro	Reference Librarian	Portland Community College
Kate Sullivan	Composition & Writing	Lane Community College
Janet Tapper	Learning Resources	Western States Chiropractic College
Kathleen Veldhuisen	Reference Librarian	Chemeketa Community College
Candice Watkins	Ref. & Inst. Librarian	Clatsop Community College
Jo Whitehorse Cochran	Arts & Communication	Klamath Community College
Nadine Williams	Library Director	Lane Community College
Theresa Yancey	Librarian	Chemeketa Community College
Dan Bjerke	Instructional Services	Oregon State University
Jean Caspers	Ref. & Instr. Librarian	Linfield College
Anne- Marie Deitering	Learning Initiatives- Prof.	Oregon State University
Sara Jameson	Composition	Oregon State University
Allen McKiel	Library & Media-Dean	Western Oregon University
Robert Monge	Instruction Librarian	Western Oregon University
Patrice O'Donovan	Library Director	Linfield College-Portland
John Replinger	Science Librarian	Willamette University
Robert Schroeder	Ref. & Inst. Librarian	Portland State University
Garrett Trott	Inst. & Ref. Librarian	Corban College
Susan Barnes Whyte	Library Director	Linfield College
Dale Vidmar	Library Inst. & Distance Ed.	Southern Oregon University
Pierina Parise	Distance Education	Emporia State University