



## II. STATEWIDE GENERAL EDUCATION POLICY

The state has high expectations for all Missouri college graduates and has promulgated a statewide general education policy that establishes a rationale for general education; defines the responsibilities of institutions, faculties, and students for general education; and promotes broad curricular goals and student competencies that should result from institutional general education programs.

### A. RATIONALE FOR GENERAL EDUCATION

General education is the curricular foundation of the American academy. It encourages students to acquire and use the intellectual tools, knowledge, and creative capabilities necessary to study the world as it is, as it has been understood, and as it might be imagined. It also furnishes them with skills that enable them to deepen that understanding and to communicate it to others. Through general education, the academy equips students for success in their specialized areas of study and for fulfilled lives as educated persons, as active citizens, and as effective contributors to their own prosperity and to the general welfare.

As the academy's knowledge of the world is structured, so must general education be constructed to introduce students to the traditional disciplines of the arts and sciences. As that knowledge is ever changing, so must general education alert students to connections between the traditional disciplines and to the potential for interaction among all branches of knowing, ordering, and imagining the real world. As the real world is diverse, so must general education inform students that the world is understood in different ways and provide them with the means to come to terms, intelligently and humanely, with that diversity. As diversities of knowing and understanding must be made open and accessible, so students must acquire appropriate investigative, interpretative, and communicative competencies.

### B. RESPONSIBILITIES

While the academy is not the only place where these high aims can be imagined and achieved, more than any other place it receives public and private support for just these ends. General education is thus a core responsibility of the academy as well as a foundation curriculum for students.

To discharge this trust, academic institutions must deliver appropriate resources to their faculties, and faculties must design and transmit to students effective means and persuasive rationales for achieving general education aims. Both institutions and faculties must satisfy their constituents that these ends are being achieved satisfactorily and in ways that are consistent with each institution's mission.

While students have a right to expect their academic institutions and faculties to fulfill these responsibilities, students also incur the obligation to act as partners in learning in order to become agents in, not merely receivers of, their own general education.

In the state of Missouri, all public institutions of higher education and each independent or proprietary institution that is signatory to the statewide credit transfer policy must agree that the



general education achievements of students who succeed in discharging their obligations are wholly transferable in terms both of graduation credit and of real competencies.

## C. TRANSFERABILITY OF GENERAL EDUCATION CREDIT

In order to facilitate the transfer of students among institutions of higher education in the state, the CBHE has supported the development of a statewide general education policy that is intended to ensure the portability of general education credit among Missouri's colleges and universities.

Each institution of higher education in Missouri fosters a program of general education. General education programs vary from institution to institution as each represents a statement reflective of the institution's ethos and mission. General education programs are developed by the faculty and validated by the institution's administration and governing board. Each institution expresses, through its general education program, the high expectations for the academic skills and knowledge that all students who complete degrees offered by that institution should master.

Consistent with its mission, each public institution of higher education in Missouri and each independent or proprietary signatory to this policy shall offer a general education program that is designed to enable students to achieve the following general education goals. In order to ensure transferability of general education credit among these institutions, each shall specify and publish a 42 semester-hour block of general education credit that will be considered equivalent to corresponding blocks of credit at other public and signatory institutions in enabling students to achieve these general education goals.

## D. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS AND COMPETENCIES

Two terms describe the aims of general education in the state of Missouri, *goals* and *competencies*. The term *goals* refers to the curricular intent of state policy regarding the academic skills and knowledge content of general education. The term *competencies* denotes illustrative state-level expectations for student performance in general education. Faculty at each institution design a general education program that fits the ethos and mission of each institution and meets state-level curricular goals. Each general education program must also specify institution-level student competencies that will follow from achieving these curricular goals and which are in alignment with the suggested competencies listed in the following sections. These general education aims and outcomes may be achieved in various ways, including through traditional courses, through interdisciplinary teaching, or through competencies embedded across the curriculum. State-level curricular goals and institution-level student competencies for general education fall into two categories: academic skills and knowledge.

### 1. Skills Areas

#### a. Communicating

State-Level Goal: To develop students' effective use of the English language and quantitative and other symbolic systems essential to their success in school and in the world. Students should be able to read and listen critically and to write and speak with thoughtfulness, clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness.

Suggested Competencies: Students will demonstrate the ability to...



- analyze and evaluate their own and others' speaking and writing. conceive of writing as a recursive process that involves many strategies, including generating material, evaluating sources when used, drafting, revising, and editing.
- make formal written and oral presentations employing correct diction, syntax, usage, grammar, and mechanics.
- focus on a purpose (e.g., explaining, problem solving, argument) and vary approaches to writing and speaking based on that purpose.
- respond to the needs of different venues and audiences and choose words for appropriateness and effect.
- communicate effectively in groups by listening, reflecting, and responding appropriately and in context.
- use mathematical and statistical models, standard quantitative symbols, and various graphical tactics to present information with clarity, accuracy, and precision.

### **b. Higher-Order Thinking**

State-Level Goal: To develop students' ability to distinguish among opinions, facts, and inferences; to identify underlying or implicit assumptions; to make informed judgments; and to solve problems by applying evaluative standards.

Suggested Competencies: Students will demonstrate the ability to...

- recognize the problematic elements of presentations of information and argument and to formulate diagnostic questions for resolving issues and solving problems.
- use linguistic, mathematical or other symbolic approaches to describe problems, identify alternative solutions, and make reasoned choices among those solutions.
- analyze and synthesize information from a variety of sources and apply the results to resolving complex situations and problems.
- defend conclusions using relevant evidence and reasoned argument.
- reflect on and evaluate their critical-thinking processes.

### **c. Managing Information**

State-Level Goal: To develop students' abilities to locate, organize, store, retrieve, evaluate, synthesize, and annotate information from print, electronic, and other sources in preparation for solving problems and making informed decisions.

Suggested Competencies: Students will demonstrate the ability to...

- access and/or generate information from a variety of sources, including the most contemporary technological information services.
- evaluate information for its currency, usefulness, truthfulness, and accuracy.
- organize, store, and retrieve information efficiently.
- reorganize information for an intended purpose, such as research projects.
- present information clearly and concisely, using traditional and contemporary technologies.

### **d. Valuing**



State-Level Goal: To develop students' abilities to understand the moral and ethical values of a diverse society and to understand that many courses of action are guided by value judgments about the way things ought to be. Students should be able to make informed decisions through identifying personal values and the values of others and through understanding how such values develop. They should be able to analyze the ethical implications of choices made on the basis of these values.

Suggested Competencies: Students will demonstrate the ability to...

- compare and contrast historical and cultural ethical perspectives and belief systems.
- utilize cultural, behavioral, and historical knowledge to clarify and articulate a personal value system.
- recognize the ramifications of one's value decisions on self and others.
- recognize conflicts within and between value systems and recognize and analyze ethical issues as they arise in a variety of contexts.
- consider multiple perspectives, recognize biases, deal with ambiguity, and take a reasonable position.

## **2. Knowledge Areas**

### **a. Social and Behavioral Sciences**

State-Level Goal: To develop students' understanding of themselves and the world around them through study of content and the processes used by historians and social and behavioral scientists to discover, describe, explain, and predict human behavior and social systems. Students must understand the diversities and complexities of the cultural and social world, past and present, and come to an informed sense of self and others. (Students must fulfill the state statute requirements for the United States and Missouri constitutions.)

Suggested Competencies: Students will demonstrate the ability to...

- explain social institutions, structures, and processes across a range of historical periods and cultures.
- develop and communicate hypothetical explanations for individual human behavior within the large-scale historical and social context.
- draw on history and the social sciences to evaluate contemporary problems.
- describe and analytically compare social, cultural, and historical settings and processes other than one's own.
- articulate the interconnectedness of people and places around the globe.
- describe and explain the constitutions of the United States and Missouri .

### **b. Humanities and Fine Arts**

State-Level Goal: To develop students' understanding of the ways in which humans have addressed their condition through imaginative work in the humanities and fine arts; to deepen their understanding of how that imaginative process is informed and limited by social, cultural, linguistic, and historical circumstances; and to appreciate the world of the creative imagination as a form of knowledge.

Suggested Competencies: Students will demonstrate the ability to...



- describe the scope and variety of works in the humanities and fine arts (e.g., fine and performing arts, literature, speculative thought).
- explain the historical, cultural, and social contexts of the humanities and fine arts.
- identify the aesthetic standards used to make critical judgments in various artistic fields.
- develop a plausible understanding of the differences and relationships between formal and popular culture.
- articulate a response based upon aesthetic standards to observance of works in the humanities and fine arts.

### **c. Mathematics**

State-Level Goal: To develop students' understanding of fundamental mathematical concepts and their applications. Students should develop a level of quantitative literacy that would enable them to make decisions and solve problems and which could serve as a basis for continued learning. (The mathematics requirement for general education should have the same prerequisite(s) and level of rigor as college algebra.)

Suggested Competencies: Students will demonstrate the ability to...

- describe contributions to society from the discipline of mathematics.
- recognize and use connections within mathematics and between mathematics and other disciplines.
- read, interpret, analyze, and synthesize quantitative data (e.g., graphs, tables, statistics, survey data) and make reasoned estimates.
- formulate and use generalizations based upon pattern recognition.
- apply and use mathematical models (e.g., algebraic, geometric, statistical) to solve problems.

### **d. Life and Physical Sciences**

State-Level Goal: To develop students' understanding of the principles and laboratory procedures of life and physical sciences and to cultivate their abilities to apply the empirical methods of scientific inquiry. Students should understand how scientific discovery changes theoretical views of the world, informs our imaginations, and shapes human history. Students should also understand that science is shaped by historical and social contexts.

Suggested Competencies: Students will demonstrate the ability to...

- explain how to use the scientific method and how to develop and test hypotheses in order to draw defensible conclusions.
- evaluate scientific evidence and argument.
- describe the basic principles of the physical universe.
- describe concepts of the nature, organization, and evolution of living systems.
- explain how human choices affect the earth and living systems.

## **E. STRUCTURE OF GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULA**

The statewide general education policy requires institutions to design and offer a general education program that includes a minimum of 42 semester-hours of credit distributed across the academic



skills and knowledge areas of the previous sections. These credit hours should be distributed in such a way that students who complete the 42 semester-hour block of general education credit from any institution of higher education in the state will have had the opportunity to achieve the high expectations embodied in the state-level goals and suggested competencies set forth in the previous section.

All Missouri public institutions of higher education and each independent or proprietary signatory institution have the privilege and responsibility to exercise their academic and institutional autonomy to design and promulgate a general education program that supports their respective institutional mission and assists students to meet these high expectations. Institutional programs may be designed in various ways to achieve these state-level goals and institution-level competencies, and the role of institutional faculty in designing institutional general education curricula and establishing general education requirements for their degrees will be respected.

Each institution will document how the design of its 42 semester-hour block of general education credit meets the state-level curricular goals and ensures that its students achieve institution-level competencies that are aligned with these goals. Each institution will also document how it implements this design, how it assesses and certifies student skills and knowledge, and how it uses assessment results to improve its general education program.

Institutions may design and promulgate general education programs that exceed the expectations of the 42 semester-hour block of credit. In this case, institutions may require transfer students to complete general education and other institutional requirements in addition to the 42 semester-hour block of credit only when these additional requirements are also required of native students. Students assume full responsibility for meeting specified degree and/or major requirements, specifically those related to course prerequisites.

Each public and signatory institution will define a 42 semester-hour general education block of credit that achieves state-level curricular goals. All of these 42 semester-hour blocks of general education credit will be considered equivalent for transfer purposes. Typically, these blocks will be composed primarily of lower-division courses and requirements. However, institutions may define their 42 semester-hour blocks of general education credit as being composed of both lower- and upper-division courses and requirements. In such cases, receiving institutions must accept, as equivalent, other institutions' blocks of general education credit-even when these are composed solely of lower-division courses.

Baccalaureate professional schools or programs may specify exceptions to the credit-hour minimum established in this section by promulgating these exceptions and by establishing specialized articulation programs related to AS and AAS degrees, as detailed in the following sections. Transfer students completing AS and AAS degrees from institutions that do not have program-to-program institutionally articulated agreements are not exempt from satisfying the requirements of departments or divisions of the institution into which the student transfers.

## F. GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION PROCESS

The purpose of the review and notification process for general education programs is to ensure that all public institutions and each independent or proprietary signatory institution have general



education programs in place that meet the statewide policy. This review process is intended to be collegial, professional, and helpful to institutions in developing general education programs that meet policy guidelines. The program review and notification process is intended to focus on strengthening general education, to be reflective of the state's commitment to institutional autonomy, and to be protective of each student's right to the fair application of this statewide credit transfer policy.

### **Initial Review and Approval.**

All Missouri public institutions of higher education and each independent or proprietary institution that is signatory to the statewide credit transfer policy will develop and post, both on the MDHE website and their own institution's website, a curricular design and an assessment plan indicating how that institution plans to implement and assess general education. The institution's program will remain on the MDHE website for a period to be determined by the CBHE's Committee on Transfer and Articulation (COTA).

All public and signatory institutions will be invited to comment on each institution's plan through the designated transfer and articulation officer. The institution whose program has been posted for comments will be responsible for forwarding comments to the CBHE for posting, evaluating the feedback, responding to the commenting institution, and determining which suggestions it will incorporate into its curriculum design. When an institution is ready to implement its program, the president will notify COTA. Once COTA acknowledges receipt of the notice, that institution is then eligible to certify its students for transfer under the statewide general education policy standards. The institution has the further responsibility to post its general education program on its website and to maintain its currency and accuracy. COTA will notify all public and signatory institutions when an institution is eligible to certify students for transfer.

Any concerns that individual institutions have about another's general education program will be handled via the **Appeals Process** that is part of this credit transfer policy.

### **Ongoing Dialogue and State-Level Policy Review.**

The annual statewide transfer and articulation conference will be used as a vehicle to encourage communication and collaboration about institutional approaches to general education. Sessions will be scheduled to discuss concerns about the state credit transfer policy and to promote good practices in general education teaching, transfer, and assessment.