

APCC Policies and Procedures for Faculty Document 2836R4

Revised Fall 2025

Program-level Exemptions to GER

Criteria and procedures for reviewing requests from schools and colleges for exemption from the General Education Requirements (GER).

Criteria

Requests for exemption from specific aspects of the General Education Requirements cannot be based on objections to the goals and rationale of the requirements, as described in UWM's General Education Policy, Faculty Document No. 2836R4, and must be consonant with the general principle and purpose of the requirements. Requests for exemptions must address both: (a) why the specific requirement at issue is inappropriate for the students of the school or college, and/or what purpose would be served by an exemption from the requirement, and (b) why the school's or college's program cannot be modified to accommodate the requirement.

In addition, requests for temporary exemptions for specified periods from specific requirements will be considered if it can be shown that time is needed to modify the school's or college's program to accommodate the requirement.

Documentation

With the request for exemption, the school or college must submit the most recent available data comparing its program with comparable programs at comparable universities vis-a-vis the requirement at issue, including universities that have adopted or are in the process of adopting university-wide general education requirements similar in character to UWM's.

Mechanism

Requests for exemption will be reviewed by a standing subcommittee of the APCC consisting of one member from each of the four divisions of the university, and the chairperson of the APCC. The subcommittee will report to the whole APCC, which must act on the request.

Review

All GER exemptions will be reviewed initially in five years and thereafter every 10 years.

Appeals

Decisions of the Academic Program and Curriculum Committee may be brought to the Faculty Senate for appeal.

Criteria and Procedures for Approval of GER Credit and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

General Policy

The administration of UWM General Education Requirements will be informed by the UW System Shared Learning Goals and embrace the definition of liberal education developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U): “Liberal education is a philosophy of education that empowers the individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement.”

University of Wisconsin System Shared Learning Goals for Students:

1. Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural World, including breadth of knowledge and the ability to think beyond one’s discipline, major, or area of concentration. This knowledge can be gained through the study of the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, and social sciences.
2. Critical and Creative Thinking Skills, including inquiry, problem solving, and higher order qualitative and quantitative reasoning.
3. Effective Communication Skills, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and information literacy.
4. Intercultural Knowledge and Competence, including the ability to interact and work with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures; to lead or contribute support to those who lead; and to empathize with and understand those who are different.
5. Individual, Social and Environmental Responsibility, including civic knowledge and engagement (both local and global), ethical reasoning, and action.

Course Policy

All departments or instructional units at UWM may submit courses to the Academic Program and Curriculum Committee for inclusion in the list of courses that satisfy GER Distribution Requirements. The APCC and its GER Subcommittee look to the faculty for leadership in curriculum design and innovation and will work closely with them to facilitate and implement new or redesigned course plans. All GER courses will include effective assessment plans specific to their chosen learning outcomes; the results of such assessment will be reported to APCC according to the schedule discussed below. The following policies govern this work:

1. In principle, courses primarily providing professional training do not meet or satisfy GER distribution requirements.
2. To be included in the GER curriculum, courses must demonstrate that they:

- a. frame instruction in the general methodology of the discipline within a broader context of liberal education as described in the UW System Shared Learning Goals statement, with attention to appropriate learning outcomes derived from those Goals;
 - b. do not deal with techniques in the narrow sense but explore the foundations of knowledge: how the discipline establishes its concepts; how these concepts are established with respect to alternative patterns of inquiry, mode of expressions, or course of action; and
 - c. follow a syllabus that explicitly articulates how the course meets UWM General Education Requirements by integrating UW System Shared Learning Goals with divisional learning outcomes; syllabi will identify the assignment(s) intended to help students achieve specific Shared Learning Goals and divisional criteria, including how such assignments will be assessed.
3. The list of approved courses may be modified by addition or deletion. Request for such modifications must be originated by the appropriate department or unit or the Academic Program and Curriculum Committee (APCC).
4. Departments or units are urged to integrate GER courses within their programs of study for the major or minor, subject to the guidelines given above.
5. Restrictions:
 - a. No course may be repeated for GER distribution credit beyond a maximum of three credits.
 - b. Courses listed as variable topics will not be given GER credit unless the course title and catalog description clearly indicate that the topics offered under that course will always conform to the GER criteria addressed in the original course submission to APCC.
6. The regular and effective assessment of GER courses and learning outcomes is a joint responsibility of instructional units and the APCC. The APCC will provide instructional units with clear guidelines and templates for reporting GER outcomes. Instructional units will collect and archive assessment data annually for internal purposes of review and action and do so according to a schedule and format approved and codified by the Departmental Committee. Instructional units will report data results and any actions taken to the APCC during the scheduled six-year external reviews discussed below.
7. Each year, the GER Subcommittee will prepare a report on the assessment of learning outcomes in one of the six GER categories (Civics and Perspectives, Communication and Literacy, Humanities and Arts, Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning, Natural Science and Wellness, Social and Behavioral Science). These will proceed in sequence each year, creating a six-year cycle for divisional outcomes reports.
8. At the beginning of the academic year, the GER Subcommittee will notify instructional units offering courses with that year's divisional criteria of the timeline for reporting results and with guidelines regarding how many courses should be reported upon.

9. By the end of the academic year, the GER Subcommittee will have submitted its report to the APCC for discussion, as well as to all reviewed instructional units. The GER Subcommittee will recommend courses that should continue to have GER or courses that should have GER removed based on the course materials submitted. For courses recommended to have GER status removed, there will be an appeals process for departments to make course adjustments to be GER compliant or submit any additional course materials.

General Education Categories

Civics and Perspectives

Students must earn a minimum of six credits in at least two courses.

Definition: Courses in this area explore how identities, perspectives, and civic contexts shape people's experiences and participation in society. Students will develop the ability to analyze diverse worldviews and lived experiences, and to understand how historical, cultural, or governmental forces influence community life, public decision-making, and engagement in democratic societies.

Criteria: Courses satisfying this requirement shall incorporate outcome 1 and/or 2, plus at least one other outcome from the bulleted list below. Students will be able to:

1. analyze foundational civic structures, principles, and processes, including governmental organization, social contracts, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and evaluate the mechanisms by which individuals participate in civic life. Incorporate how differing societal perspectives shape the interpretation, development, and functioning of civic participation and responsibilities; and/or
2. analyze the perspectives, worldviews, and lived experiences of a group or groups, defined by factors such as race, ethnicity, region, nationality, religion, gender, LGBTQ+ status, disability, class, or other dimensions of identity, and how these shape participation in civic and cultural life within or across societies; and
 - examine how literary, artistic, musical, or other texts and creative works reflect, shape, or challenge civic principles, social identities, and cultural perspectives;
 - examine historical episodes in the formation and evolution of identity, citizenship, and civic participation, including how definitions of belonging, rights, and participation have changed over time;
 - investigate how individuals and groups have experienced differential access to opportunities, resources, or civic participation based on dimensions of identity;

- analyze the goals, methods, and impacts of social movements or reform efforts that have shaped civic life, institutions, or definitions of citizenship in the United States or other national/transnational contexts;
- compare civic traditions, institutions, social formations, or perspectives on citizenship across different nations, regions, cultures, or historical periods;
- analyze the role of public policy in democratic systems, including how policies are formulated, implemented, or evaluated, and their impact on society and civic life; or
- investigate and analyze the roles of professions and disciplines in civic life, including their legal and ethical obligations and the consequences of their actions. Examine the historical contexts and methods by which laws, regulations, and professional standards are formulated and implemented, and evaluate their impact on society and civic participation.

Communication and Literacy

Students will earn a minimum of six credits in at least two courses.

Definition: Courses in this area focus primarily on developing written and oral communication skills to ensure that students will be creative, flexible, and effective communicators, whether speaking or writing. This requirement may be satisfied by either:

1. earning a passing grade in English 102 (or equivalent) and three additional credits in Communication and Literacy; or
2. placing out of taking English 102 by earning a suitable score on a test as determined by the English Department, and six credits in Communication and Literacy.

Expectations: The courses in this area typically are low-enrollment courses involving substantial instruction in the four modes of literacy (that is, speaking, reading, writing, and listening), with the primary emphasis on speaking and/or writing. The APCC defines this as follows: the context in which student work is assessed (i.e., lecture, discussion, lab) has an enrollment cap of 25 or fewer students. Requests to approve courses with larger class sizes must demonstrate clearly how the objectives and requirements of the course can be satisfied within the larger format.

Criteria: Courses satisfying this requirement shall incorporate all of the following learning outcomes. Students will be able to:

1. demonstrate critical reading, logical thinking, and the use of argument and evidence;
2. apply appropriate stylistic and disciplinary conventions in writing and/or speaking;
3. locate relevant information and critically analyze information from primary or secondary sources for some portion of the speaking and/or writing;
4. adapt messages to the diverse needs of individuals, groups, and contexts; and

5. reflect critically on one's own messages after the communication event.

Requirements: These will vary. Courses may include the option to integrate speaking and writing into digital/online media formats, but each course must satisfy the following:

1. Multiple assignments [6-8 would be ideal], spaced throughout the semester that culminate in oral and/or written presentations. The balance between oral and written presentations may vary, as appropriate to the discipline and the instructor's preferences, so long as the total amount of graded communication remains reasonably consistent from course to course.
2. At least two assignments that require students to submit a draft or give a practice speech, assimilate feedback on it, and then revise it. Additional opportunities for feedback and revision would be better yet.
3. At least one individual conference with each student, preferably early in the semester, to discuss the student's writing and/or speaking skills.
4. A requirement that a portion of the speaking and/or writing be based on a research component, appropriate to the discipline and course.

Humanities and Arts

Students must earn a minimum of six credits in at least two courses.

Courses in this area must address learning outcomes from one of the two categories below: 1) Engaging with Creative and Artistic Expression or 2) Understanding Ideas, Languages, and Cultures.

1. Engaging with Creative and Artistic Expression

Definition: A branch of learning focusing on the conscious use of skill and creative imagination in the production of artistic objects or performances.

Courses in this area focus on the history, philosophy, theory, or practice of the creative, expressive, and interpretive arts and provide students with insight into the skills and disciplines involved in the creative arts and communications. Students will gain an understanding of the creative process and the ways that creative thinking associated with the arts can be more broadly applicable.

Criteria: Courses satisfying this requirement shall incorporate outcome (a) and at least one other of the following learning outcomes. Students will be able to:

- a. demonstrate comprehension of historical, philosophical, theoretical, or aesthetic perspectives commonly used in the understanding of a specific art; and
- b. apply knowledge of artistic principles, conventions, methods, and practices through the creation or production of works of art; or

- c. compare the expressive and formal features of different artistic media and/or cultural traditions; this may be accomplished through an analytic study or as part of an original artistic work.

2. Understanding Ideas, Languages, and Cultures

Definition: The academic disciplines that investigate human constructs and values, as opposed to those that investigate natural and physical processes, and those concerned with the development of basic or professional skills.

The humanistic disciplines, such as art history, history, language and literature, philosophy, religious studies, film and media studies, are concerned with questions, issues, and concepts basic to the formation of character and the establishment of values in a human context. They also provide literary, aesthetic, and intellectual experiences that enrich and enlighten human life. In these courses, students will use humanistic means of inquiry, such as the critical use of sources and evaluation of evidence, the exercise of judgment and expression of ideas, and the organization, logical analysis, and creative use of substantial bodies of knowledge in order to approach the subject of study.

Courses in this area focus on the study of human thought, history, language, and artistic expression, fostering a deeper understanding of our shared human experience. Students will enhance their abilities to engage with multifaceted ideas and develop effective communication skills to articulate complex concepts.

Criteria: Courses satisfying this requirement shall incorporate outcome (a) and at least one other of the following learning outcomes. Students will be able to:

- a. identify the formation, traditions, and ideas essential to major bodies of historical, cultural, literary, or philosophical knowledge; and
- b. respond coherently and persuasively to the materials of humanities study; this may be through logical, textual, formal, historical, or aesthetic analysis, argument, and/or interpretation; or
- c. apply diverse humanistic theories or perspectives to other branches of knowledge or to issues of universal human concern.

Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning

Students will earn a minimum of three credits in at least one course.

Definition: Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning (MQR) involve the recognition, construction, and use of valid mathematical models to analyze and manipulate quantitative information to reach reasonable conclusions, predictions, or inferences. Courses in this area ensure that students will have the ability to evaluate, construct, and communicate arguments using quantitative methods and reasoning.

Criteria: Courses satisfying this requirement shall incorporate one or more of the following learning outcomes. Students will be able to:

1. recognize and construct mathematical models and/or hypotheses that represent quantitative information;
2. evaluate the validity of these models and hypotheses;
3. analyze and manipulate mathematical models using quantitative information;
4. reach logical conclusions, predictions, or inferences;
5. assess the reasonableness of their conclusions.

Requirements: MQR courses must include the following:

1. significant use of quantitative tools in the context of other course material;
2. enforcement of the Standard MQR Prerequisite, or stricter (specification of one from a subset of the standard prerequisite courses or a higher math placement level).

Satisfaction of the Standard MQR Prerequisite requires one of the following:

- a. a placement level of 30 on the Math Placement Test (or another appropriate test as determined by the Mathematical Sciences Department);
- b. a minimum of 2.0 credits, with a grade of C or higher, in any 100-level course in the Math curricular area (excluding Math 194 and Math 199) or in Math/Philos 111;
- c. a minimum of 2.0 credits, with a grade of C or higher, in equivalent or higher-level Math coursework (higher level includes all courses in the Math curricular area with a course from condition (b) of this definition as a prerequisite); or
- d. earning a minimum of 2.0 credits, with a grade of C or higher, in any transfer coursework that meets this requirement.

Note: Completion of Mathematical Statistics 215 does not satisfy any of the conditions.

3. low enrollment courses, defined by the APCC as follows: The context in which student work is assessed (i.e., lecture, discussion, lab) has an enrollment cap of 25 or fewer students. Requests to approve courses with a larger class size must demonstrate clearly how the objectives and requirements of the course can be satisfied within the larger format.
4. an assessment plan designed to demonstrate that the course meets the objectives and student learning outcomes stated above.

Disqualifying criteria: Courses that do not satisfy the criteria for MQR courses include those that deal with quantitative information only in one or more of the following ways:

1. Students are given a mathematical model (e.g., equation, formula) and are required merely to produce a numerical or quantitative answer through routine calculations or symbolic manipulation.
2. Students are required to use a computer package to perform calculations or carry out a study without subjecting their results to critical analysis; comparing them to other numerical data; arriving at conclusions, predictions, or inferences; and assessing their reasonableness.
3. Students are required to deal with quantitative information in primarily descriptive or conceptual ways. For example, courses in “research methods” that lack a substantial reasoning component based on tools covered in a Standard MQR Prerequisite course would not be approved.

Natural Science and Wellness

Students will earn a minimum of six credits in at least two courses.

Requirements: To satisfy the NSW GER requirement, students must take at least one course including a lab component.

Lab courses in this category must have low-enrollment sections. The APCC defines this as follows: The context in which student work is assessed (i.e., lecture, discussion, lab) has an enrollment cap of 25 or fewer students. Requests to approve courses with a larger class size must demonstrate clearly how the objectives and requirements of the course can be satisfied within the larger format.

Courses in this area must address learning outcomes from one of the two categories below: 1) Understanding the Natural World or 2) Fostering Health and Wellbeing.

1. Understanding the Natural World

Definition: A branch of science concerned with the physical world and its phenomena and with discovering the laws governing them. The branches of Natural Sciences, such as astronomy, geosciences, biological sciences, chemistry, physics, that deal primarily with matter, energy, and their interrelations, reactions, and transformations; with living organisms and vital processes; with the laws and phenomena relating to organisms, plants and animal life; with the physical processes and phenomena of particular systems; and with the physical properties and composition of nature and its products.

Criteria: Courses satisfying this requirement shall incorporate outcome (a) and at least one other of the following learning outcomes. Students will be able to:

- a. identify and apply the major concepts of a natural science discipline, including its breadth and its relationship to other disciplines; and

- b. explain and illustrate the relationships between experiments, models, theories and laws;
- c. demonstrate an understanding of the process of generating, testing, analyzing, and interpreting data and applying this knowledge to create or validate models and solve problems;
- d. discuss and assess the limitations of data and the possibility of alternative interpretations;
or
- e. apply ethical reasoning to questions, concepts, and practices within a natural science discipline.

2. Fostering Health and Wellbeing

Definition: Courses in this area investigate physical and mental health and well-being among individuals or populations, including social and environmental determinants of health. Students will explore scientific, practical, or experiential aspects of health and well-being across levels of influence including individual, interpersonal, environmental, cultural, or societal. Courses will use real-world applications to develop health and well-being literacy and foster skills in critical thinking and problem solving.

Criteria: Courses satisfying this requirement shall incorporate outcome (a) and at least one other of the following learning outcomes. Students will be able to:

- a. explain social, environmental, cultural, economic, psychological, behavioral, physical, and biological aspects of health and well-being; and
- b. obtain, process, and apply information needed to promote and maintain health and well-being for themselves, their families, or their communities; or
- c. use evidence to think critically and ethically about factors, attributes, and systems that influence health and well-being.

Social and Behavioral Science

Students will earn a minimum of three credits in at least one course.

Definition: A branch of science dealing with the study of human behavior, human cultural and physical variation and evolution, and the organization, development, and consequences of human activity, both past and present.

Courses in this area investigate human behavior, society, culture, and values of the past and present. Students will develop the ability to assess diverse and substantial artifacts of human knowledge, and to think critically about cultural traditions, social organizations, and institutions.

Criteria: Courses satisfying this requirement shall incorporate outcome 1 and at least one other of the following learning outcomes. Students will be able to:

1. recognize and analyze intrapersonal, interpersonal, and/or socio-cultural factors associated with individual behavior, collective action, or societal development; and
2. identify and critically evaluate the function, structure and development of human collectivities, organizations, institutions, and cultures, their infrastructures and interrelationships;
3. recognize and contextualize human capacities for and/or techniques of creating behavior acquisition and change as viewed from both intra- and inter-cultural perspectives;
4. demonstrate the ability to identify, apply and effectively communicate methodologies designed for conducting inquiry into human behavior, collective action, societies, or cultures; or
5. critically evaluate and apply alternative theoretical frameworks that have been used to offer meaningful explanations of social phenomena.

Student Appeals

Appeal Policy

1. Student appeals for exceptions from one or more of the General Education Requirements will be handled initially by the school or college in which the student is enrolled (according to the Registrar's classification) in accordance with established department/college/university procedures.
2. Appeal boards, committees, or officers are expected to adhere to APCC guidelines on student appeals, as set forth in the Basis for Appeal and Procedures sections below. Questions concerning any part of this policy statement should be referred to the Chair of the APCC.
3. The APCC will monitor the enforcement of GER by schools and colleges through the appeal procedure. If, in the judgment of the committee, questions of compliance are raised, and consultation between the APCC and the unit fails to resolve the problem, the matter will be referred to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for intervention.
4. Approval of GER waivers made by one school/college may transfer with the student to another school/college provided the integrity of the receiving school/college degree requirements is maintained.

Basis for Appeal

1. Students may appeal for exception from one or more of the General Education Requirements on the basis of:

- a. equivalent academic, professional, or vocational accomplishments as certified by transcripts, diplomas, work records, etc.;
 - b. exceptional circumstances, including cases of unwarranted hardship in the fulfillment of the requirements;
 - c. special requirements of combined majors or unique programs of study, if it can be shown that the intent of GER is fulfilled by the student's program; or
 - d. an academic grievance against a member of the UWM faculty or staff regarding GER courses or exams, if the grievance is upheld by the appropriate appeals body.
2. Students may NOT appeal for exception from the GER on the basis of:
- a. philosophical or other objections to GER;
 - b. failure to plan course work properly, or to schedule the required examinations in a timely fashion;
 - c. inability to pass a course or examination;
 - d. academic deficiencies upon admission to UWM;
 - e. transfer to UWM from another institution; or
 - f. a credit load in excess of the University's minimum for graduation, if the additional credits are judged to be within the normal range for the student's degree or program of study.

Procedures

1. Student confers with department or program advisers to determine grounds of appeal.
2. Student files an appeal with the school or college dean, or with appropriate appeals committee, according to the unit's standard procedures.
3. Dean/committee evaluates appeal according to APCC guidelines and Faculty Senate document relating to GER; decision is rendered based on specific circumstances, as presented and substantiated by the student.
4. Questions regarding compliance with a unit's handling of appeals are brought to the APCC chair. If the chair is unable to resolve the matter through consultation with the unit, the matter will be submitted to the committee.
5. Upon a majority vote of the APCC, units whose appeals procedures seem to be noncompliant with the goals and standards of the University's General Education Requirements, will be referred

to Academic Affairs. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs will bear the responsibility for intervention and enforcement of the regulations.

Special Students, Transfer Students, and Second-Degree Candidates

1. A course taken at another college/university will count towards GER distribution if it is equivalent to a course on the approved list.
2. A course taken at another college/university will not count toward GER distribution if it is equivalent to a UWM course that is not on the approved list (see 4 below, for an exception for Universities of Wisconsin transfer students).
3. A course that transfers to UWM as an elective from MATC, Universities of Wisconsin campuses, or other schools/colleges approved by the APCC chair will count toward GER if the department recommends that the course satisfies its criteria for GER courses, and the APCC chair approves the recommendation.
4. In accordance with the UW-System Undergraduate Transfer Policy, the following principles of accommodation apply:
 - a. Credits that are designated as fulfilling a Core General Education Requirement at one UW institution will transfer as general education credits at the receiving campus. This principle should apply, regardless of whether the receiving institution has a direct course equivalent that satisfies general education.
 - b. When a course is applied toward Core General Education Requirements, the receiving UW institution will apply it to the same category as the sending institution, although exceptions may be made. As appropriate and based on specific course equivalencies, a course may be moved to a different category at the receiving institution.
 - c. UW institutions should permit courses completed by UW-System transfer students to transfer in accordance with the course equivalency in effect when the courses were taken and when doing so is beneficial to students.
5. Second-degree candidates from accredited institutions are not subject to GER.