

**Proposal from the General Education Task Force to Academic Council  
April 12, 2014**

As a result of the review of Winthrop's general education program that we undertook at the charge of the Provost, and based on the analysis that we reported to Academic Council and Faculty Conference in March 2014, as well as the ACU definition of general education, the new definition for General Education that we reported to Faculty Conference in March 2014, and the seven principles of General Education revision we reported to Faculty Conference in March 2014, we bring forward to Academic Council the following seven recommendations, which we suggest be voted on separately:

- 1. Change the name of Winthrop's general education program from "The Touchstone Program" to "the General Education Program."**

Rationale: This will reduce confusion for faculty, staff, current students, and incoming students.

- 2. Strongly encourage departments and programs to move to reduce the minimum number of hours required for graduation from 124 to 120, except where licensure, accreditation, or complexity make such reductions impossible.**

Rationale: 120 hours is more in line with most of our peer institutions and aspirational institutions, and allows students to complete an undergraduate degree within the 120 hours of financial aid offered by the LIFE scholarship.

- 3. Require that departments and programs re-examine their overall programs of study in relation to general education in accordance with the seven principles set out by this task force.**

Rationale: The reduction in hours both to graduate and to complete general education offers all departments and programs the opportunity to ensure that they have removed any unnecessary restrictions, brought their programs into line with the General Education program in its current form, and provided students with the opportunity to make appropriate critical choices about the courses they take to complete their degree requirements.

- 4. Recommend that Winthrop adopt a modified version of our current General Education program that reduces the overall number of hours from 46-58 to 35-50 hours, as outlined in the following table. This modified program will allow two courses from a student's major program of study to apply to General Education (usually 6 hours), exclusive of the Writing Intensive, Oral Intensive, and Technology proficiencies [which should be met in the major if possible].**

Rationale: The modified program retains the shared core of ACAD 101 (for first-time college students), WRIT 101, HMX 102, and CRTW 201; adds one hour in Physical Activities (which may be waived for some groups); deletes the Logic/Language/Semiotics requirement; moves the Quantitative requirement into a new grouping with Natural Sciences; and concentrates the hours in Social Sciences and Arts And Humanities. In doing so, it allows students to achieve "broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing essential intellectual, civic, and practical capacities" as recommended by the American Association of Colleges and Universities, while allowing students to practice critical thinking in choosing courses and

exploring new areas outside their majors and minors. The table below illustrates the requirements of the proposed program. *Please note that the “Seven Principles” will allow more than two courses to be applied if they are required as such for licensure or accreditation purposes. Broadly interdisciplinary majors may also need such flexibility. CUC will work in consultation with majors to resolve issues regarding the way such situations affects fulfillment of general education within programs of study.*

5. **Although it was outside our charge of looking at ways in which the General Education program might have lost focus or have fallen victim to ‘major creep,’ we are aware that many faculty have questions about the General Education Core (ACAD 101, WRIT 101, HMXP 102, and CRTW 201) in terms of content, sequencing, consistency of delivery, transferability, and other issues. We therefore recommend that the Provost appoint a task force of faculty and staff with appropriate expertise to evaluate the Core and make recommendations for any changes that might be necessary to ensure that it continues to meet the principles of the General Education program.**

Rationale: Feedback received by our task force indicates that there are a number of concerns about the General Education core. We do not wish to penalize our students by holding up consideration of the current changes while the core is reviewed, but we agree that it is time to look at the core critically and to decide what, if any, changes are required to keep it consistent with our program and University Learning Competencies.

6. **Charge the General Education Curriculum Committee to examine the category descriptions and requirements to ensure that they are congruent with the revised General Education definition and program, and ensure that the processes by which courses are included or recertified for the General Education program document that these courses meet all the requirements for inclusion, such as course content, writing components, etc.**

Rationale: If proposal 4 goes through, we will need a set of criteria for inclusion, goals, and student learning outcomes for the Physical Activities category, so that departments and programs can have that information when revising their curricula; also, questions have been raised as to whether the criteria, goals, and SLOs for several of the areas may need updating or rethinking, given that more than a decade has passed since they were created. It may be necessary for the GNED committee to begin this work in advance of the 2014-15 academic year, so we wanted to make everyone aware of these needs.

7. **Charge the Office of Records and Registration or appropriate support offices to update the instructions for the Curriculum Application Process to remind departments and programs of the need to explain clearly the reasons (such as licensure or accreditation requirements) for specifying or restricting the selection of courses in a student’s general education choices so that there is a clearly-documented rationale for why such decisions were made.**

Rationale: The “justification” box on the Curriculum Application System exists, but we want to create a clear record of why decisions are being made to better inform both students and faculty about the constraints placed on individual degree programs. A clear explanation will lessen the reliance on “lore” to explain why curriculum decisions have been made in the past.

#### Recommendation 4: Proposed General Education Program (for 2015-16 Catalogue)

<b>ACAD 101</b> (required of first-time freshmen only)	1
<b>Shared Skills and Proficiencies</b>	
<b>Writing and Critical Thinking</b>	
<b>WRIT 101</b> (A grade of C- or better is required)	3
<b>HMPX 102</b> (Grade of C- or better in WRIT 101 is pre-req)	3
<b>CRTW 201</b> (A grade of C- or better in HMPX is pre-req)	3
<b>Oral Communication</b> (may be met in course counted in the major)	0-3
<b>Technology</b> (may be met in course counted in the major)	0-3
<b>Intensive Writing</b> (may be met in course counted in the major)	0-3
<b>Physical Activity</b> (may be waived for some students)	1
<b>Thinking Critically Across Disciplines</b>	
<b>Global Perspectives</b>	3
<b>Historical Perspectives</b>	3
<b>Constitution Requirement</b> (may be met in another Gen Ed category)	0-3
<b>Introducing Students to Broad Disciplinary Perspectives</b>	
<b>Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts</b>	9
<b>Social Science (at least two designators if 6 hrs)</b> 3-6	
<b>Humanities &amp; Arts (at least two designators if 6 hrs)</b> 3-6	
<b>Quantitative Skills and Natural Science</b> (including one lab science)	9-12
<b>Quantitative</b> 3-8	
<b>Natural Science (if two courses taken, one each from 2 of 3 categories and one must be a lab)</b> 3-8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>35-50</b>

#### APPENDICES

##### American Association of Colleges and Universities Description of General Education

The American Association of Colleges and Universities defines “general education” as “part of a liberal education curriculum that is **shared by all students**. It provides **broad exposure to multiple disciplines** and forms the **basis for developing essential intellectual, civic, and practical capacities**. General education can take many forms, and increasingly includes

introductory, advanced, and integrative forms of learning.” [emphasis ours].

[https://www.aacu.org/leap/what\\_is\\_liberal\\_education.cfm](https://www.aacu.org/leap/what_is_liberal_education.cfm)

### **General Education Task Force’s Definition of “General Education” for Winthrop University**

General Education builds a broad knowledge base, develops critical thinking skills, fosters innovation, and prepares students to become responsible, informed, and effective citizens in a changing and complex world.

### **General Education Task Force’s Seven Principles to Preserve the Integrity of Winthrop’s General Education Program:**

- I. Majors should specify specific courses in general education categories **only** if they are bound by accreditation or an outside agency.
- II. Majors may recommend a specific course for discipline or pedagogical reasons, but they must accept other courses that have been approved for our general education program if students take them (or have previously taken them).
- III. If a student changes majors, he or she may use previously-taken courses to satisfy general education requirements, except in the case of accreditation or licensure issues.
- IV. Majors are encouraged to fulfill the writing intensive, technology, and oral proficiency requirements within the major. We realize that this will not be possible in all majors. *(These are exempted from item V because they represent proficiencies rather than points of view.)*
- V. There should be a **two course limit** on how much of a student’s major program of study may be used to meet GNED requirements; departments should be asked to make changes in their programs to avoid exceeding that limit.
- VI. Overall, to fulfill general education requirements, we should try to focus on competencies rather than specific courses as much as possible.
- VII. Majors should not be so rigid in the way they interface with general education that students can’t complete the major within four years if they do not start in the major from the first semester, accreditation requirements notwithstanding.