

## **Motion to revise General Education Requirements at NJIT**

**Approved by CUE/GUR subcommittee, March 6, 2017**

**Approved by Faculty Senate, March 23, 2017, as amended**

### **1. The Current GUR**

The current GUR can be found at <http://catalog.njit.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies-procedures/general-university-requirements/>

The short version:

Computing Sciences: 3 credits  
English Composition and Cultural History: 9 credits  
Humanities and Social Science Electives (upper-level): 9 credits  
Management: 3 credits  
Mathematics: 6-9 credits  
Natural Sciences: 7 credits (including a laboratory experience)  
Physical Education: 2 credits  
Social Sciences (lower-level): 6 credits  
Total: 45-48 credits

### **2. The Proposal**

The proposal is laid out in two sections. The first section provides a bare bones description of the general education requirements. The second section provides the methodology for changing and updating the general education courses and requirements.

The following proposal outlines not merely a list of university requirements, but a plan for general education centered on thematic areas of knowledge and skill necessary to improve and deepen students' understanding and ability to interact with the world. These thematic areas provide a meaningful and easy way to present and articulate the structure and necessity of the program to a variety of audiences (e.g., faculty, students, and parents). These thematic areas are:

Liberal Arts Literacy  
Quantitative reasoning  
Scientific literacy  
Social science literacy  
Computational literacy

The following proposal differs from the current GUR program in two significant ways. First, it offers a minimal, not maximal, proposal for developing the skills required by students. This change has two main benefits: it allows students time in their undergraduate careers to take courses of interest beyond their major program and general education requirements and it allows colleges to impose college-specific requirements for their students that may be important for their students but not

crucial for all NJIT students. The second significant difference with the current GUR system is that the proposal makes general education and the courses that comprise it a living process at NJIT. We supply a methodology for adding or removing courses to the general education choices and for updating the general education requirements as necessary.

## 2.1 General Education Courses and Expectations

General Education Requirements		
Thematic Area <sup>1</sup>	General Education Requirement	Number of Credits
Liberal Arts Literacy	HUM 101, HUM 102	6
	One introductory (2xx) course followed by two advanced (3xx) courses in Humanities and History. Courses to be included have the prefix Com, Eng, Hist, Lit, Phil, STS, and Thtr.	9 (3 credits in 2xx plus 6 credits in 3xx)
	One HSS 4xx Senior Seminar. <sup>2</sup>	3
Scientific Literacy <sup>3</sup>	7 credits in natural science courses including a lab experience	7
Quantitative Reasoning/ Mathematics <sup>4</sup>	6 credits in courses devoted to quantitative reasoning, with one course including exposure to statistics/probability	6
Computing Literacy	3 credits in a course covering the foundations of computational thinking	3
Social Science Literacy	3 credits in an appropriate social science or management-related course	3
	total credits to fulfill general education requirements:	37

In this chart each thematic area is identified with a course requirement and a number of credits. These course requirements are based on established courses at NJIT. The committee believed that this was not only the most efficient, but also most realistic way initially to envision any curricular change. Abandoning completely what we already have would cause unnecessary academic and administrative upheaval.

<sup>1</sup> The original subcommittee proposal consisted of ten competencies. Those competencies formed a guide in developing the final version, but do not appear as separate items in the presentation. During the formulation of the final proposal, those competencies were combined or amended to work better within an overall program of study.

<sup>2</sup> The prerequisite for this course would be completion of the 6 credits of 300-level courses, although in some cases 3 credits at the 300-level can be a co-requisite.

<sup>3</sup> At least one course in each sequence within each thematic area will have no prerequisite.

<sup>4</sup> At least one course in each sequence within each thematic area will have no prerequisite.

If the proposal is adopted, early implementation of the plan can be accomplished by grandfathering current GUR courses into the appropriate thematic areas. Using the learning outcomes of the current GUR courses as a guide, we can develop a systematic cataloging and presentation of the set of learning outcomes for each thematic area. The set of learning outcomes for each thematic area can then be used in the management of the general education program including the addition or elimination of courses

It is the committee's intention for new courses to be added to the list of general education courses and that the current courses should not be the only courses that fulfill these requirements. If this general proposal is accepted, then it will be the responsibility of a general education committee to identify the learning outcomes from the current courses in each thematic area that best embody the literacies and skills that part of the general education plan is designed to enhance in students. The general education curriculum can then be enhanced by new courses that also embody those learning outcomes and are approved through a process outlined in the next section of this report.<sup>5</sup>

## **2.2 Management of General Education Program**

General education is not a staid set of requirements, but a living part of any university degree. From time to time, as determined by the faculty, there may be need to amend or change the general education program. The Faculty Senate will determine the makeup of a CUE subcommittee that will have two charges: assessment of any addition of courses designed to fulfill part of the general education program and oversight of any changes to the overall general education program.

Each of the thematic areas of the general education program involves learning outcomes for the courses that will fulfill that part of a student's education. Any new course designed to be added to the list of courses that fulfill that role must be shown to share the learning outcomes of the other courses that fulfill the same role. It is the charge of the general education committee to ensure that proposed courses meet this requirement and fit within the overall general education program (e.g., the committee may expect that new courses share similar prerequisites to existing courses). Overseeing periodic assessment of the learning outcomes for the GUR will be the responsibility of this committee.

The second charge of this committee will be to ensure that NJIT's general education program is timely, responds to the needs of the current student body, and accurately reflects NJIT's educational mission. Periodic review of what is being offered to fulfill students' general education requirements will ensure that parts of the general education program do not become the responsibility or burden of single departments and places the commitment to a wide, general education in the hands of a university-wide body.

## **3. Conclusion**

This proposal is aimed at ensuring our students are provided the basis for any college education: the skills and experiences helpful in leading an engaged and fulfilling life. While there will always be debate about what a general education program should include, this proposal was developed and

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<sup>5</sup> The identification and construction of these learning outcomes will be a time-consuming intellectual project. To undertake that project without first receiving feedback from CUE and Faculty Senate could result in a waste of intellectual labor on the part of the committee.

approved through the hard work of a diverse group that included students, faculty, and administrators devoted to NJIT's educational mission. This proposal accounts for the needs of NJIT students as well as the realities of demanding degree programs, the potential for state mandated degree requirements, and the strengths and character of our faculty. It is intended for general education to be a living part of the NJIT and this is embodied in the proposal's implementing a methodology for amendments and changes to the program and the courses that comprise it.

Keywords: Faculty Senate, motion, CUE, Committee on Undergraduate Education, GUR, GER, General Education Requirements, General University Requirements