AA 27 General Education Courses

Classification: Academic Affairs
Responsible Authority: Dean, Academic Development
Executive Sponsor: Vice President, Academic
Approval Authority: President’s Council
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Date Last Reviewed: 2012.11.07
Mandatory Review Date: 2017.11.07

PURPOSE
To comply with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Binding Policy Directive: Framework for Programs of Instruction which requires the inclusion of discrete General Education courses in programs of study.

SCOPE
All Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma programs.

DEFINITIONS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word/Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program of Study</td>
<td>A group of courses leading to a certificate, diploma or degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Administrator</td>
<td>Program Chair, Course Chair or Academic Manager</td>
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<td>PLAR</td>
<td>Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition</td>
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<td>GECC</td>
<td>General Education Curriculum Committee</td>
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<td>Gen Ed</td>
<td>General Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Curriculum Review Committee</td>
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POLICY
1. The purpose of General Education courses in the Ontario college system is to develop educated citizens who are aware of the diversity, complexity, and richness of the human experience and who are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work. General Education courses are to cover five (5) specific themes:
   - Arts in Society
   - Civic Life
   - Social and Cultural Understanding
   - Personal Understanding
• Science and Technology.

2. The College is accountable for delivering the standards as published by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

3. In programs of study leading to an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, graduates shall successfully complete courses in a discipline outside their main field of study. This will typically be accomplished by students taking three courses offered and designated as General Education courses. Although some General Education courses may be mandated by the College, students shall have the opportunity to exercise choice amongst General Education electives.

4. In programs of study leading to an Ontario College Credential, the graduates shall engage in learning that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study.

5. Postsecondary programs at Algonquin College will comply with Ministry policies by including General Education courses equivalent to 45 normative hours using a combination of mandated and elective courses as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Education Requirement</th>
<th>Program Credential</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Algonquin College Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses required</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses that may be mandated</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Themes learners must cover</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Themes available to learners</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NSDP = Non-Semestered Diploma Program

6. General Education courses are intended to encourage and support continuous learning, and shall be delivered in class or electronically as discrete courses designed to address one or more of the five themes. To the extent possible, General Education electives are to be delivered online.

7. General Education courses, whether mandated or elective, shall meet the criteria for a General Education course, listed in item 9 below.
8. General Education courses can require as prerequisite an introductory Gen Ed course. This is to allow the option of depth to be met. However, General Education courses shall not require a vocationally-specific course as a prerequisite.

9. To be designated a General Education course, a course shall meet the following criteria.
   a. be 45 hours in length; any exceptions must be approved by the Vice President Academic;
   b. clearly contribute to learning that is distinct from specific vocational skills;
   c. enable college learners to more effectively meet the societal challenges that face them as they take their place in community, family, and working life;
   d. ensure the focus of the course is sufficiently broad to be of value to students regardless of their vocational interests;
   e. deal with issues related to the content, and not just with mastery of the content;
   f. provide opportunities for learners to explore questions related to issues and values raised by the subject matter and their application to contemporary life, covering at least two of the following:
      o ethics;
      o historical context;
      o theoretical bases.
   g. include discussion, demonstration, or practice in a variety of modes of inquiry in mandated and/or elective course.

10. The General Education Committee, a sub-committee of the Curriculum Review Committee, will review new General Education courses against these criteria to ensure that college programming meets provincial guidelines. In addition, they will review the programs of study and make recommendations to ensure programs meet General Education requirements. The Committee will also validate the General Education designation and theme identification for individual courses.

11. Students choose General Education electives from a pool of courses, approved by the General Education Committee.

12. Mandated General Education courses may be provided as service courses to other departments.

13. Mandated General Education courses associated with a program will be reviewed on a five year cycle as part of the Program Quality Review. Online Elective General Education courses in the General Education pool are program independent and are not reviewed during Program Quality Review. Each Online Elective General Education pool course will be reviewed at least once every five years as part of the Cyclical Review of Online Elective General Education Courses.

**Transfer of Academic Credit/PLAR for General Education Courses**

14. For *mandated courses*, the granting of transfer of credit will be based on the successful prior completion of a course covering the same theme and meeting similar course learning requirements. The Course Chair will be responsible for assessing applications for transfer of credit.

15. For *elective courses*, the granting of transfer of credit will be based on the nature of the course(s) a student has successfully completed. There are two possibilities:
15.1 If the course the student wishes to use as the basis for an exemption matches an Algonquin College General Education elective directly, the request for transfer of credit will be sent to the course academic administrator for validation. Students will receive a grade of EX on their transcript next to the General Education elective being matched.

15.2 If the course the student wishes to use as the basis for an exemption does not match an Algonquin course learning requirements outcomes but appears to match one of the theme areas, the request for transfer of credit will be sent to the administrator who is responsible for General Education at the student’s campus for a ruling. Unlike mandated General Education and vocational courses, students can apply for a transfer of credit if the eligible course taken was completed more than five years prior to their current program of study. Successful students will receive a grade of EX on their transcript next to the General Education theme number being matched:

- GED0011 Arts in Society
- GED0012 Civic Life
- GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding
- GED0014 Personal Understanding
- GED0015 Science and Technology

16. Students who wish to use PLAR to challenge the General Education electives based on prior learning may challenge the theme areas. The Prior Learning Assessment Office and subject resource specialist will assess applications for credit and, where credit is recognized, assign it to the appropriate theme outlined below, and enter it on the student’s transcript:

- GED0011 Arts in Society
- GED0012 Civic Life
- GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding
- GED0014 Personal Understanding
- GED0015 Science and Technology

17. Students who apply for transfer of academic credit must still meet the General Education breadth requirements. The General Education courses must cover the number of themes identified for their program of study. If all previous courses have been in only one theme, the student will be required to take one or more courses to achieve the required breadth.

**PROCEDURE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Programs of Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>In designing or reviewing programs of study, ensure that the combination of mandated and elective courses allows students access to General Education courses in each of the five themes:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Administrator</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Arts and Society,</td>
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</table>
- Civic Life,
- Social and Cultural Understanding,
- Personal Understanding,
- Science and Technology.

1.2 Ensure that programs of study for postsecondary programs comply with the requirements for mandated and elective courses as outlined in Article 5 under Policy.

2. **General Education Courses**

2.1 Identify the one theme addressed in the General Education course outline when:
   a. the course is being developed,
   b. the course is first included in a Program of Study,
   c. the course is presented as part of the Program Quality review.

2.2 Assign the one theme of a General Education course in the curriculum course module of GeneSIS.

2.3 Deliver *Mandated* General Education courses, as developed, loaded, and scheduled.

2.4 Deliver *Elective* General Education courses as developed, loaded, and scheduled.

2.5 Co-ordinate and monitor centrally the elective offering of General Education courses.

3. **Transfer of Credits - Academic Credits**

3.1 Once accepted in a full-time program, or when requesting transfer of credit for continuing education courses, submit an Application for External Transfer of Academic Credit for General Education Electives form (see Appendix 1) with English transcripts and course outlines, to the Registrar’s Office. An assessment fee will be charged, except where articulation agreements are in place.

3.2 Assess applications for transfer of credit for *mandated* courses, based on successful completion of a course covering the same theme and meeting similar course learning requirements.
3.3 Assess applications for transfer of credit for elective courses, based on the nature of the course(s) a student has taken previously and if the request is granted, grant the student a grade of EX for the General Education elective being matched or next to the General Education theme number being matched:

- GED0011 Arts in Society
- GED0012 Civic Life
- GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding
- GED0014 Personal Understanding
- GED0015 Science and Technology

4. Transfer of Credits - Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)

4.1 Assess applications for credit using PLAR and assign a grade of EX next to the General Education theme number being matched:

- GED0011 Arts in Society
- GED0012 Civic Life
- GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding
- GED0014 Personal Understanding
- GED0015 Science and Technology

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
Appendix 1 – Application for External Transfer of Academic Credit (Exemption) forms

RELATED POLICIES
AA 09 Transfer of Academic Credit (Internal)
AA 10 Transfer of Academic Credit (External)
AA 15 Certificates and Diplomas
AA 39 Program Progression and Graduation Requirements
AA 26 Course Outlines
AA 06 Prior Learning Assessment
AA 38 Program Quality Assurance

RELATED MATERIALS
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities’ Binding Policy Directive: Framework for Programs of Instruction. Revised: 31/07/09

APPLICATION FOR EXTERNAL TRANSFER OF ACADEMIC CREDIT (EXEMPTION) FORMS

Forms required to request a transfer of academic credit (exemption) are found at: http://www.algonquincollege.com/RegistrarsOffice/forms/forms.htm

The following form is to be completed in order to receive an exemption:
1. Application for External Transfer of Credit for General Education Electives