

## AA27

## General Education and Degree Breadth Courses

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Responsible Authority:	Dean, Academic Development
Executive Sponsor:	Senior Vice President, Academic
Approval Authority:	Algonquin College Executive Team
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### PURPOSE

To comply with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' Binding Policy Directive: *Framework for Programs of Instruction*, which requires the inclusion of discrete General Education courses in programs of study, and the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) Manual for Ontario Colleges, which requires a balance of core and breadth courses in degree programs.

### SCOPE

All Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma and Bachelor Degree programs

### DEFINITIONS

Word/Term	Definition
Academic Administrator	Program Chair, Course Chair, Academic Manager, or Dean
Breadth	Breadth (or non-core) courses are those that contribute to the knowledge in fields outside of the main field/s of study in a bachelor's degree program.
Gen Ed	General Education
NSDP	Non-semestered Diploma Program
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
PQAC	Program Quality Assurance Committee
PRC	Program Review Committee
Program of Study	A group of courses leading to a certificate, diploma or degree

### POLICY

#### General Education Courses

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. 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. Students are to be exposed to at least one discipline outside their main field of study so as to increase their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. In order to achieve an appropriate level of breadth, students are encouraged to select courses in more than one theme. Although some General Education courses may be mandated within the program of study, students shall have the opportunity to exercise choice amongst General Education electives.
3. Postsecondary programs at Algonquin College will comply with Ministry policies by including General Education courses equivalent to 42 normative hours using a combination of mandated and elective courses as follows in Table 1:

*Table 1: General Education Requirement by Program Credential*

<i>General Education Requirement</i>	<i>Program Credential</i>				
	Algonquin College Certificate	Ontario College Certificate	Ontario College Diploma including NSDP	Ontario College Advanced Diploma	Ontario College Graduate Diploma
Courses required	N/A	1	3	3	N/A
Courses that may be mandated	N/A	1	2	2	N/A
Minimum <i>Themes</i> learners must cover	N/A	1	1	1	N/A
Minimum <i>Themes</i> available to learners	N/A	1	5	5	N/A

4. General Education courses are intended to encourage and support continuous learning, and shall be delivered in class or online 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.
5. General Education courses, whether mandated or elective, shall meet the criteria for a General Education course, listed in item 7 below.

6. General Education courses can require as prerequisite an introductory General Education 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.
7. To be designated a General Education course, a course shall meet the following criteria:
  - a. be 42 hours in length; any exceptions must be approved by the Senior 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.
8. The Program Quality Assurance Committee will review new General Education courses against these criteria to ensure that college programming meets provincial guidelines. In addition, as part of Program Quality Review, or where a review is requested, 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.
9. Where students have General Education electives, they choose General Education electives from a pool of courses, approved by the Program Quality Assurance Committee.
10. Mandated General Education courses may be provided as service courses to other departments.
11. Mandated General Education courses associated with a program will be reviewed on a five-year cycle as part of the Program Quality Review. General Education electives in the General Education pool are program independent and are not reviewed during Program Quality Review. Each General Education pool elective will be reviewed at least once every five years as part of the Cyclical Review of Elective General Education Courses by the Program Quality Assurance Committee.

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

12. Unlike transfer credit to core courses, students may apply for a transfer of credit to mandated or elective general education courses if the eligible course taken was completed more than five years prior to their current program of study.
13. The granting of transfer of credit will be based on the nature of the course(s) a student has successfully completed in prior academic study. There are two possibilities:
  - 13.1 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.
  - 13.2 If the course learning requirements of the course the student wishes to use as the basis for an exemption do not match those of an Algonquin course but appear to match one of the theme areas, the request for transfer of credit will be sent to the academic administrator who is

responsible for General Education at the student's campus for a ruling. 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

14. Students who wish to use PLAR to challenge a General Education course based on prior learning may challenge the theme areas. The Prior Learning Assessment Office and assessor 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

#### **Degree Breadth Courses**

15. The purpose of degree breadth courses is to contribute to the knowledge in fields outside of the main field/s of study in the degree program.

16. Breadth courses provide knowledge in at least two of the following areas outside of the core field of study:

- a. Humanities;
- b. Sciences;
- c. Social Sciences;
- d. Global Cultures, including Indigenous cultures;
- e. Mathematics.

17. In degree programs, the balance of core and breadth courses is normally achieved as follows:

- a. Minimum of 20% of the program hours are in breadth courses, which can be any degree level courses outside of the core;
- b. At least one breadth course is an elective, freely chosen by the student.

18. Breadth courses are developed and delivered in accordance with the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) Manual for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. The College's Guiding Principles for Breadth Curriculum are contained within its Degree Breadth Framework and subject to periodic review by PEQAB.

19. Algonquin College's Degree Breadth Framework is predicated on breadth course offered at the 1000-, 2000-, and 4000-levels, intended to meet the PEQAB requirements and aligned to the following standards:

- a. 1000-level introductory humanities courses intended to contribute towards students' attainment of key skills in critical thinking, logic and argumentation, quantitative reasoning, and written and oral communication;
  - b. 2000-level introductory courses in disciplines primarily in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, global cultures (including Indigenous cultures), and/or mathematics. Students are engaged in the discourse through the application of theories and concepts, critical analysis and modes of reasoning. At a minimum, a program offers at least one non-core course as an elective, and;
  - c. 4000-level courses offered as electives that serve to build on the knowledge in an area of study and requiring greater depth by exploring and applying advanced theoretical concepts, developing varied modes of analyses and ways of thinking inherent in those disciplines and applying them in novel and creative ways. At a minimum, a program offers at least one non-core course as an elective.
20. Breadth courses at the 1000-level are mandated in all degree programs. Breadth courses at the 2000- and 4000-level are electives in degree programs. Introductory Research and/or Statistics courses at the 2000-level may be mandated in degree programs to support degree level knowledge and graduate applications to further study.
21. The degree courses are typically embedded within the degree program of study in accordance with Table 2:

Table 2: Degree Breadth Course Curriculum Map

Program of Study ( <i>Breadth Course Requirements</i> )		Distribution of Breadth Courses
Year 1	Level 1 ENL1100 Communications and Academic Writing	Level 2 PHI1000 Logic and Critical Thinking
	Two (2) courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandated for all degree students</li> <li>• Mandated for all degree programs</li> <li>• 1000-level course number</li> </ul>	
Year 2	Level 3 Statistics AND/OR Introduction to Research	Level 4
	Up to two (2) courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandated for students</li> <li>• Mandated for programs</li> <li>• Statistics and/or Introduction to Research</li> </ul>	
Year 3	Level 5 Elective 2000-level Non-Core Courses	Level 6
	Minimum of two (2) 2000-level electives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elective for students</li> <li>• Mandated for programs</li> <li>• 2000-level course number</li> </ul>	
Year 4	Level 7 Elective 4000-level Non-Core Courses	Level 8
	Minimum of one (1) course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elective for students</li> <li>• Mandated for programs</li> <li>• 4000-level course number</li> </ul>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>A minimum of eight (8) Non-Core Courses<sup>1</sup></b>

22. The Program Quality Assurance Committee will review new breadth courses against these criteria to ensure that college programming meets provincial guidelines. In addition, as part of degree consent renewal, or where a review is requested, the Committee will review the programs of study and make recommendations to ensure programs meet breadth requirements. The Committee will also validate the breadth designation and theme identification for individual courses.

23. Where students have breadth electives, they choose breadth electives from a pool of courses, approved by the Program Quality Assurance Committee.

24. Breadth courses will be reviewed on a periodic basis, as set by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board.

**Transfer of Academic Credit/PLAR for Breadth Courses**

<sup>1</sup> Non-core curriculum must be a minimum of 20% of the program hours. Depending on program design and hours, additional non-core courses may be required.

25. Unlike core degree 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.
26. 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.
27. For *elective courses*, the granting of transfer of credit will be based on the alignment of the course to the Degree Breadth Framework. There are two possibilities:
  - 27.1 If the course the student wishes to use as the basis for an exemption matches an Algonquin College breadth elective directly, the request for transfer of credit will be sent to the Chair, Academic Development for validation. Students will receive a grade of EX on their transcript next to the breadth elective being matched.
  - 27.2 If the course learning requirements of the course the student wishes to use as the basis for an exemption do not match those of an Algonquin College course but align to the levelling criteria in the Degree Breadth Framework, the request for transfer of credit will be sent to the Chair, Academic Development for an evaluation. Successful students will receive a grade of EX on their transcript next to the breadth levelling number being matched:
    - GED1000
    - GED2000
    - GED4000
28. Students who wish to use PLAR to challenge the degree breadth courses based on prior learning may challenge the theme areas and levelling criteria. The Prior Learning Assessment Office and subject resource specialist will assess applications for credit and, where credit is recognized, assign it to the appropriate level outlined below, and enter it on the student's transcript.
  - GED1000
  - GED2000
  - GED4000

## PROCEDURE

<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>
1. Programs of Study	
1.1 In designing or reviewing programs of study, ensure that the combination of mandated and elective courses allows students access to General Education or degree breadth courses in each of the relevant themes.	Academic Administrator
1.2 Ensure that programs of study for postsecondary programs comply with the requirements for mandated and elective courses as	Academic Administrator

outlined in Article 5 or 20 under the Policy.

## 2. General Education Courses

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|---|--|
| 2.1 Identify the theme(s) addressed in the General Education course outline when:<br>a. the course is being developed;<br>b. the course is first included in a Program of Study;<br>c. the course is presented as part of the Program Quality Review. | Professor  |
| 2.2 Assign the one theme of a General Education course in the curriculum course module of GeneSIS   | Professor  |
| 2.3 Deliver <i>Mandated</i> General Education courses, as developed, loaded, and scheduled.   | Department responsible for the subject area, Professor |
| 2.4 Deliver <i>Elective</i> General Education courses as developed, loaded, and scheduled.  | Department responsible for the subject area, Professor |
| 2.5 Co-ordinate and monitor centrally the elective offering of General Education courses.   | Office of the Senior Vice President, Academic          |

## 3. Degree Breadth Courses

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|--|--|
| 3.1. Identify the level and theme(s) addressed in the breadth course inventory when:<br>a. The course is being developed;<br>b. The course is first included in a Program of Study or elective group;<br>c. The course is reviewed as part of the Degree Breadth Framework review. | Professor  |
| 3.2. Deliver degree breadth courses as developed, loaded, and scheduled. All Professors teaching degree breadth courses must meet PEQAB faculty qualifications requirements.   | Department responsible for the subject area, Professor |
| 3.3. Co-ordinate and monitor centrally the offering of degree breadth courses.   | Chair, Academic Development                            |

## 4. General Education Courses Transfer of Credits – Academic Credits

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|--|---------|
| 4.1. 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 Gen Ed Electives | Student |
|--|---------|



[\(https://www.algonquincollege.com/ro/course-exemptions-credit-transfers/\)](https://www.algonquincollege.com/ro/course-exemptions-credit-transfers/) with English transcripts and course outlines through ACSIS.

An assessment fee will be charged for external transfers, except where articulation agreements are in place.

4.2. Assess applications for transfer of credit for based on successful completion of a course covering a general education theme. Course Chair

4.3. 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 the grade of EX for the general education elective being matched or next to the theme number being matched: Assigned faculty

- GED0011 Arts and Society;
- GED012 Civic Life;
- GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding;
- GED0014 Personal Understanding;
- GED0015 Science and Technology.

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

5.1. Assess applications for credit using PLAR and assign a grade of CR next to the General Education theme number being matched: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Office and subject resource specialist

- GED0011 Arts and Society;
- GED012 Civic Life;
- GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding;
- GED0014 Personal Understanding;
- GED0015 Science and Technology.

6. Degree Breadth Courses – Transfer of Credits – Academic Credits

6.1. Once accepted in a full-time program, or when requesting transfer of credit, submit an Application for External Transfer of Academic Credit form (<https://www.algonquincollege.com/ro/course-exemptions-credit-transfers/>) with English transcripts and course outlines through ACSIS. Student

An assessment fee will be charged, except where articulation agreements are in place

6.2. Assess applications for transfer of credit for breadth courses, based on successful completion of a course aligning to the appropriate level in the Degree Breadth Framework. Chair, Academic Development

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

7.1. Assess applications for credit using PLAR and assign a grade of CR next to the course being matched:

Prior Learning  
Assessment and  
Recognition Office and  
assessor

### SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

n/a

### RELATED POLICIES

AA09 Transfer of Academic Credit (Internal)  
AA06 Prior Learning Assessment  
AA10 Transfer of Academic Credit (External)  
AA15 Certificates and Diplomas  
AA26 Course Outlines  
AA38 Program Quality Assurance  
AA39 Program Progression and Graduation Requirements

### RELATED MATERIALS

Ministry of Colleges and Universities' Binding Policy Directive: *Framework for Programs of Instruction*. Revised: 31/07/09

<http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/documents/FrameworkforPrograms.pdf>

Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board Manual for Ontario Colleges **Revised annually**.  
<http://www.peqab.ca/Handbooks.html>