

Curriculum Committee Report to the Faculty on the Pomona College General Education System

Report Overview and Significant Findings

Executive Summary of Report:

1. General Education requirements show the priorities of the college and are responsive to student backgrounds and interests. GE requirements appropriately change over time.
 2. Students and alumni are broadly satisfied or neutral with the current system (90% of students report being neutral, satisfied or very satisfied with GE and 73% of alumni found the GE requirements to be “about right.”). Faculty members are mildly dissatisfied with GE (14% report being very dissatisfied, 30% dissatisfied, 30% neutral, 22% satisfied and 4% very satisfied regarding the current GE system). Faculty members in Area 1 are the most dissatisfied with the current system.
 3. Among faculty members who are dissatisfied with GE, the common theme is that it allows for too narrow of an educational path, but there is variation on where specifically the current system falls short.
 4. Faculty broad consensus priorities for General Education include:
 - a. Breadth of Study
 - b. Written Communication
 - c. Critical Thinking
 5. There is wide support across alumni, faculty and students for earlier engagement with breadth. Despite this consensus view, over 30% of students complete their Area requirements in their final year at Pomona, and 12% in their final semester. Only 43% of students complete their Area requirements within their first two years. Faculty worry that initial over specialization/narrowness is not beneficial for students.
 6. Students do not equally distribute courses between Breadth Areas outside of their major. The majority of students not majoring in Physical and Biological Studies (Area 4) take only one course in Area 4 (70+%). To a lesser extent, this is also true of History, Values, Ethics and Cultural Studies (Area 3). The majority of students not majoring in Areas 1, 2 and 5, do choose to take more than one course in each of those Areas.
 7. We do not detect a large percentage of faculty members who desire fewer requirements or significantly more requirements. Faculty members mostly range from agreeing that the current requirements are adequate, to desiring a slight increase in requirements. It is not clear that faculty are in agreement regarding any single new requirement for GE.
 8. The College would benefit from a principled statement of goals for GE. This statement could be used to evaluate the system when it is reviewed again in 10 years.
 9. It is not clear from the student and alumni perspective that ID1 is meeting the goal of improving college writing. Students and alumni who are critical of ID1 find that the course does not sufficiently prepare them for college writing. Only 27% of students found that ID1 left them “well prepared” or “very well prepared” for college writing, and among students and alumni expressing dissatisfaction, ID1 was the most frequently cited current GE requirement.
 10. Questions of diversity, difference and power have factored into discussions related to GE. Many alumni, faculty and students support a requirement for students to engage with world views, experiences and philosophies other than their own.
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