

Curriculum Committee General Education Proposals

Draft for Comment

April 24, 2015

The Report on the General Education at Pomona College consolidates information received from 105 faculty survey responses, multiple faculty forum discussions, 711 student survey responses, 338 alumni responses and transcript data from 2,196 students in an attempt to provide a complete review of the current system. Further feedback was received through the Faculty Forum on February 15, and 17 submitted proposals suggesting changes to the current GE system.

Areas of Concern with the Current GE System

- 1) Writing, including ID1
- 2) Earlier Exposure to Breadth
- 3) Slightly Increase Breadth

Potential Areas include:

- a) Creation/Performance of Art/Expression
 - b) Diverse Viewpoints/Community Engagement
 - c) Oral Communication Skills
 - 4) Principled Statement of Goals for GE
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Affirm the current system of:

1. **General Education Requirements**

- The Critical Inquiry seminar for first-year students (ID 001 PO), taken in the first semester. (The seminar is not required of transfer students and enrollment in it is restricted to students admitted as first-year students.)
 - The Breadth of Study Requirements
 - The Foreign Language Requirement
 - The Physical Education Requirement
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Proposals:

- 1) Add a Writing Intensive overlay course requirement to be taken after ID 1 but before the 8th semester. Writing Intensive courses will work with the Director of College Writing and the faculty Critical Thinking and Writing Committee and require 15 or more final pages of edited written work. A course fulfilling a student's Writing Intensive requirement may also be used to fulfill a Breadth of Study Area requirement.
- 2) Add a Speaking Intensive overlay course requirement. Speaking Intensive courses require twenty percent or more of a student's grade be from graded oral presentation activities with at least three instances of individual feedback over the semester (in the case of a half credit course, forty percent or more of the student's final grade must be from oral communication activities). A course fulfilling a student's Speaking Intensive requirement may also be used to fulfill a Breadth of Study Area requirement. However a single course cannot be designated as both Writing Intensive and Speaking Intensive.

- 3) Require a second Physical Education activity for graduation. The two Physical Education courses used to fulfill this requirement may not be taken in the same semester, and may not be identical courses. Given the intensity and diversity of training inherently involved, two semesters of the same varsity athletics course may be used to fulfill this requirement.
- 4) Divide Area 1 into one area with classes focused on Analysis/Criticism and a second area with classes focused on Creation/Performance of Works of Creative Expression, increasing the Breadth of Study requirement from 5 Areas to 6 Areas.

Area 1. Criticism, Analysis, and Contextual Study of Works of the Human Imagination

Art History
 Classics
 Dance (history, criticism)
 Literatures (English, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and classical literatures)
 Media Studies (theory, history courses)
 Music (theory, history, appreciation, ethnomusicology)
 Theatre (history, criticism)

Area 6. Creation and Performance of Works of Art and Literature

Art
 Creative writing courses in literature departments
 Dance (performance courses)
 Media Studies (production courses)
 Music (performance, composition courses)
 Theatre (performance courses)
 Courses in other departments/programs as appropriate

- 5) Students who have not completed their Breadth of Study Requirements (5 or 6 Areas) by the end of their 4th semester at the college will receive last place pre-registration (in their class year) in each subsequent semester until fulfilling their Breadth of Study Requirements.
- 6) Add an Engaging Difference overlay requirement. Engaging Difference courses provide a sustained analysis of a non-Western culture or of a minority group(s) within a Western culture.

7) Principled Statement of Goals for GE

Pomona College Learning Goals

The Pomona College curriculum reflects the institution's commitment to a liberal arts education. Such an education cultivates free thinking across a breadth of disciplines for students while fostering continued learning, responsible global citizenship, and excellence throughout their lives. Through close faculty interaction, a liberal arts education gives students the opportunity to pursue their intellectual passions and produce independent and meaningful work. General education, in the form of critical inquiry, breadth of study, communication, foreign language, and physical education requirements, ensures engagement with a variety of curricular areas. It is an introduction to modes of learning through the Pomona College curriculum, and it is a means of expanding student pursuits beyond previous experience. Upon graduation, Pomona College students should have developed:

- Knowledge and Modes of Thinking
 - Breadth of study in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and mathematical reasoning
 - Depth of study in at least one particular area: The Major
- Skills
 - Analysis and argumentation
 - Creativity
 - Critical thinking and inquiry
 - Embodied practices
 - Literacies (e.g., quantitative literacy and information literacy)
 - Written and oral communication
- Character and Responsibility
 - Ethical reasoning
 - Global and local citizenship
 - Intellectual character (e.g., courage, skepticism, and curiosity)
 - Intercultural understanding
 - Responsibility beyond self

Amendment Items for Discussion:

- a. Eliminate the following requirement:
No two Breadth Areas can be fulfilled with courses from the same discipline; it is not permissible to have only one discipline represented in two different areas.
- b. Amend Proposal 4 to divide Area 1 courses based on department instead of course content. i.e.

Area 1. Humanities

Art History

Classics

Literatures (English, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and classical literatures)

Media Studies

Area 6. Arts

Art

Dance

Music

Theatre

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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