

Proposal to Revise General Education at SUNY New Paltz  
to align with the SUNY General Education Framework

Submitted by the General Education Board for faculty consideration and comment  
December, 2021

This proposal presents the necessary modifications to bring SUNY New Paltz's General Education Program (GE4) into alignment with the new [SUNY General Education Framework](#) (Framework) that was approved by the SUNY Board of Trustees on November 9, 2021. Given the short time frame for implementation, the fact that SUNY New Paltz recently revised its GE program, and that program already aligns with the Framework in many ways, this proposal suggests minimum modifications to GE4. The new Framework designates Diversity: Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice a SUNY-wide GE requirement. The Framework also decenters - rather than removes - Western Civilization in the curriculum. Instead of dividing 'Western Civilization' from 'Other World Civilizations,' the Framework unifies these categories as World History and Global Awareness.<sup>1</sup> Further, student learning outcomes have been updated across the knowledge and skills areas and competencies. This gives us an opportunity to continue our efforts to create a more inclusive core curriculum.

Only the minimum modifications are being proposed at this time because the SUNY Board of Trustees has required that the Framework be instituted for students matriculating in Fall 2023. This gives us one and a half years to both develop and implement a program that aligns with the Framework. This tight timeline is further complicated by the fact that faculty are already exhausted from learning new teaching modalities, developing new technology skills, revising their classes to be remote or hybrid, supporting students who are struggling with learning and mental health due to the COVID-19 crisis, and dealing with their own personal crises and grief caused by the pandemic. As a point of comparison, our most recent General Education revision process was both ambitious and contentious, taking seven years to develop and three years to implement.

GE4 is a product of extensive research and deliberation. The "[Proposal for Restructuring the SUNY New Paltz General Education Program and University Curriculum](#)," submitted by the GE Board in December 2015, took the following into consideration: a campus-wide survey, ongoing informal conversations, ongoing meetings with representatives of different campus groups, earlier faculty votes on GE and university requirements, and the research of the liberal education committees. When the proposal moved to the Curriculum Committee that body conducted focus groups and a faculty survey, and reviewed chairs' reports and individual comments. This information was considered in their development of the "[Proposal to Revise General Education at New Paltz](#)" submitted in April 2016. Because this process was so extensive and feedback was sought at multiple levels of development we feel confident maintaining the core of GE4 and only making the changes necessary to bring the program into compliance with the Framework.

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<sup>1</sup> Our university will need GE3/GE4 WEST courses for students who matriculated before Fall 2023. See page 3 for more details.

There were several promising proposals brought forward in the past by the Liberal Education Committees and the GE Board that were not pursued. Further, when the Framework was originally proposed, faculty had compelling ideas for additional requirements and curricular innovations. Moving forward with minimal changes does not preclude these proposals from being considered in the future. Unfortunately, the tight SUNY deadline and conditions created by the COVID 19 pandemic make this a difficult time to consider a more ambitious revision of the General Education Program.

## **A. SUNY GE FRAMEWORK REQUIREMENTS**

The SUNY GE framework includes twelve categories of knowledge, skills and competencies—ten knowledge and skills areas expose students to different ways of knowing so that they can make reasoned judgements outside as well as inside their academic field, and enable them to develop diverse perspectives and global understanding; and two core competencies that extend beyond discipline-specific knowledge and skills. Among the specific knowledge and skills categories is a new requirement, Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice. This requirement aligns with the SUNY Board of Trustees’ Policy on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (adopted September 10, 2015) as well as SUNY’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Phase I Action Plan (2021), which recommends including a diversity category in the general education requirements. In addition, explicitly delineated skills and competencies in quantitative reasoning, scientific reasoning, oral and written communication, critical thinking and reasoning, and information literacy help to ensure SUNY graduates have the 21st-century knowledge, skills, and competencies they need, while also satisfying institutional accreditation expectations. Finally, the framework provides flexibility for campuses to develop innovative and robust local general education programs for their respective undergraduate degrees.

### **1. Knowledge and Skills Areas**

(a minimum of 7 of 10 categories of knowledge and skills are required)

The following four are required

Communication – written and oral

Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

Mathematics (and quantitative reasoning)

Natural Sciences (and scientific reasoning)

In addition, a minimum of three of the following six are required

Humanities

Social Sciences

The Arts

US History and Civic Engagement

World History and Global Awareness

World Languages

### **2. Core Competencies – both required**

Critical Thinking and Reasoning

Information Literacy

## **B. PROPOSED GE4 MODIFICATIONS TO ALIGN WITH THE FRAMEWORK**

### 1. Required Knowledge and Skills Areas

As stated above, the SUNY-wide GE Framework requires a minimum of 7 of 10 categories of knowledge and skills areas. We propose requiring all 10 categories for the GE program at SUNY New Paltz, which will allow continuity with GE4.

### 2. Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

We propose moving the Diversity degree requirement back into the General Education Program, utilizing the Framework title of Diversity: Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice and accompanying SLOs. The Diversity graduation requirement was passed by the faculty in December 2014. The motion read “Consistent with our SUNY New Paltz mission statement and our history, all students are required to complete at least one course that examines the perspective of traditionally underrepresented groups within the United States as a graduation requirement.” Previously, New Paltz had a local GE Diversity requirement. The Diversity Board developed diversity SLOs and has shepherded Diversity courses through the approval process.

We agree with the Diversity Board that whether a university requirement or part of GE, a single course requirement cannot possibly satisfy our curriculum’s role in satisfying the SUNY New Paltz mission, which opens by stating our dedication “to the construction of a vibrant intellectual/creative public forum which reflects and celebrates the diversity of our society.” While not a question directly under the purview of the GE Board, we join the Diversity Board in calling for continued campus-wide discussion of and resources directed at revising and reimagining our curriculum and pedagogy more broadly, centering diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### 3. Western Civilization

The knowledge and skill area of Western Civilization (WEST) has been incorporated in the new World History and Global Awareness area (WHGA). Courses that are currently in the WEST category should be evaluated to determine if they meet the WHGA SLOs or if they could be modified to meet the SLOs. It is worthy of note that currently the second WEST SLO states that students will “relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.” This suggests that some courses may find a place in the new World History and Global Awareness area. If not, other knowledge and skills areas should be considered.

Faculty may also decide to teach their GE3/GE4 WEST classes without converting them into a World History and Global Awareness class, and then retire them or keep them as a class outside of the GE program when they are no longer needed. Since students who matriculated prior to Fall 2023 will still need GE3/GE4 WEST to graduate, including students who are returning to New Paltz after an absence, our university will need these courses for several years.

#### 4. Student Learning Outcomes

Academic programs will need to review, and possibly revise, General Education courses to meet the new Framework SLOs. The amount of change needed varies depending on the knowledge and skills area. The SLOs in the following areas have remained unchanged or have been reduced: Mathematics, Natural Sciences (and Scientific Reasoning), Social Sciences, The Arts, and World Languages. Further, the SLOs for the competencies Critical Thinking and Reasoning and Information Literacy (currently Information Management) have been revised. Courses designated on departmental and programmatic curricular maps as addressing the current SLOs for these competencies will also need to be reviewed for alignment with the new SLOs and possibly updated. A [comparison chart](#) has been developed to assist in this process and more formal guidance will be issued in the future.

#### C. GE BOARD REPRESENTATION

The following changes will need to be made to the composition of the GE Board membership: addition of representatives for the knowledge and skills areas of Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice, and World History and Global Awareness and the removal of a representative for Western Civilization.

#### D. PROPOSED ASSESSMENT PLAN CHANGES

We propose increasing the time frame for the assessment cycles and eliminating one assessment category in an effort to reduce assessment load while maintaining assessment integrity. These changes are proposed to begin AY 2022/2023.

##### 1. Competencies Direct Assessments:

Competencies will be assessed on a four year cycle rather than a three year cycle. This will provide increased opportunities for programs to conduct assessments of their own choosing and/or assessments that align with accreditation requirements.

2022/2023 - Programmatic Choice

2023/2024 - Information Literacy

2024/2025 - Programmatic Choice

2025/2026 - Critical Thinking and Reasoning

##### 2. Knowledge and Skills Areas Reflective Direct Assessments

Knowledge and skills (content) area assessments will be conducted on a four year cycle rather than a three year cycle. The additional year will allow for analysis of and discussions about results, suggestions for changes that would lead to enhanced student learning, and implementation of those changes.

2022/2023 - Closing the Assessment Loop

2023/2024 - Humanities, Natural Sciences (and Scientific Reasoning), Social Sciences,  
Communication - Oral

2024/2025 - The Arts, World Languages, Mathematics (and Quantitative Reasoning),  
U.S. History and Civic Engagement

2025/2026 - Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice, World History and Global  
Awareness, Basic Communication - Written

### 3. Faculty Survey Questions

The survey of faculty teaching GE courses will be discontinued. Questions included in the survey will be used as points of discussion for faculty teaching in GE knowledge and skills areas during the “closing the assessment loop” cycles.