

Rationale for changes to the implementation plan for the transition to the new General Education Curriculum:

The plan originally proposed by the University General Education Committee for the transition to the new general education curriculum was that only courses in categories that did not have new student learning outcomes (SLOs) would be able to count as satisfying requirements for students who elect to switch to the new program. Thus, courses designated Writing Intensive, Speaking Intensive, First Year Seminar, Experiential Learning (Beyond the Classroom in the new program), Natural Science, and Language courses that students had previously taken would be able to carry forward to the new program. Courses that students had previously taken in categories that either had significantly changed SLOs (Quantitative Reasoning) or were in new categories with new SLOs (Arts and Literature, Humanities, and Social Science) would not carry forward because they were not approved with this set of SLOs when the students took the courses.

Documenting the process by which courses are judged to fulfill general education requirements is an expectation of our accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). We can expect scrutiny of our process during our next review by SACSCOC in 2022, especially since our new program preserves some elements of the previous program (e.g. WI, SI, FSEM) while creating new categories with new SLOs in others. Learning outcomes are fundamental, and when there are substantive changes to these SLOs, there should also be changes to the courses to ensure that the new SLOs are met in order to maintain the credibility of outcomes assessment. The development of these new SLOs and the means of assessing them was the basis of the work done by faculty working groups this summer and is also borne out by the process now underway to identify courses to fill the new categories.

Following the distribution of the FAQs document prior to fall break, the Committee received feedback from faculty questioning the reasoning behind these decisions, as there will be a large number of courses that would meet both the old SLOs and the new SLOs. While there may be some changes to assessment in these courses to meet the new SLOs, the content and intent of the courses would remain largely unchanged; therefore, it seemed unreasonable that a current general education course would not carry forward for students who elect to switch if that course is also approved for the new general education program. Consideration of several factors, including the barrier to students being able to switch to the new program due to the large number of courses that would need to be completed (potentially lengthening their time to degree), led to the decision by the Committee to allow courses that students have taken that are currently approved as general education courses in the categories of Arts, Literature, and Performance; Human Experience and Society, and Quantitative Reasoning that are also approved as Arts and Literature, Humanities, Social Science, or Quantitative Reasoning in the new program to satisfy these requirements. The Digital Intensive, Diverse and Global Perspectives, and After Mary Washington categories will all require students to take a new course/experience to satisfy the requirements. Any previously taken courses that end up with one of these designations will not be counted in the new program because they were not approved general education courses at the time they were taken.