

Core Curriculum and General Education Committee Response to Recommendations in the General Education Task Force Report

Background and Context

In May 6, 2008, the University Senate approved a list of intended learning outcomes for all students who graduate from Auburn University with a bachelor's degree. The outcomes were drafted by the Senate's Core Curriculum Oversight Committee, a group composed of faculty from across campus, including seven representatives from departments that teach Core courses and four faculty representatives from other academic disciplines and the University Libraries. The approved learning outcomes are more general than those for a typical program of instruction and express the educational goals our institution wants all Auburn students to reach, no matter what their chosen degree program. Assessing to what extent students attain these goals provides a means to evaluate and enhance the general strength of an Auburn education. The university must be able to define these key educational outcomes and the extent to which graduates have attained them in order to win reaccreditation by SACS in 2013. The general education goals and outcomes can be accessed at:

http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/undergrad_studies/ccoc_genedoutcomes.html.

During fall 2008 and spring 2009, representatives from the Office of Undergraduate Studies and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment conducted an Alignment Study through interviews with Core Curriculum program directors. The goal of the study was to explore how the general education outcomes are being addressed in existing Core Curriculum courses. A summary of findings from the report indicate that: (1) certain Core programs are closely aligned with a single general education outcome while other programs are aligned with several outcomes; and (2) although students are exposed to many of the general education outcomes, evidence of student work is not always collected, thus preventing programs from being able to demonstrate to what extent students are achieving the outcomes. The report in its entirety can be found at <https://oira.auburn.edu/assessment/articles/CCReport.pdf>.

As part of Auburn University's strategic plan, a Task Force on General Education was appointed in 2008 to "conduct a review of general education requirements and novel general education programs at peer institutions." Members of the Task Force were charged with the following: (1) reviewing the University's current general education requirements (Core Curriculum); (2) identifying the requirements of the General Studies Curriculum established under state law by the statewide Articulation and General Studies Committee (AGSC); (3) determining the extent to which opportunities for greater flexibility or inclusiveness exist within Auburn's general education requirements; (4) researching other models used at other land-grant universities, and (5) preparing a report that identifies alternative courses of action, with recommendations, for review by the Provost and discussion with the University Senate.

Recommendations of the GETF Task Force

The GETF Report made three recommendations related to the Core Curriculum: (1) To change the structure of the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee, (2) To restructure the Core Curriculum so that it aligns with the AGSC agreement and (3) To align the student learning outcomes to the current courses. The final report from the General Education Task Force can be found at http://www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/pdf/GETF_Report0903.pdf.

In fall, 2009, the Senate voted to restructure and rename the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee to reflect broader representation from all of the Colleges and Schools, in addition to the Core areas. As its first task, the Core Curriculum and General Education Committee discussed and voted on which of the following Task Force's recommendations related to the AGSC agreement* it would endorse:

1. Reduce the two required sequences (one in Area II, one in Area IV) to one required sequence. To the extent permitted by AGSC regulations or programmatic accreditation standards, students should select the sequence. Reducing the requirement to one course sequence would match the AGSC requirements.

2. Make philosophy an option in the arts and humanities area. The AGSC does not require philosophy. Changing this requirement means that, although students do not have to take both the history and literature sequences, they still must take another humanities course.
3. Bring the science requirement in line with AGSC. Auburn requires eight semester hours including labs in an approved sequence; AGSC requires eight semester hours including labs which may be in two separate lab sciences.

**A list of the approved AGSC courses and definitions of Areas I-IV can be found at:
<http://stars.troy.edu/stars/crslists.htm>.*

Committee Recommendations relative to restructuring the Core Curriculum according to the AGSC agreement

Following review of the GETF Report and committee votes, the Core Curriculum and General Education Committee recommend the following actions to the Senate for consideration at its next meeting. These changes in the framework of the Core Curriculum parallel the existing AGSC structure. There is no change in total hours as dictated by the AGSC agreement, but the changes in choice options allow for greater flexibility:

- 1. Only require one sequence in either History or Literature.**
- 2. Allow other course options in Area II of the AGSC menu, in addition to Philosophy.**
- 3. In Area IV, no longer organize the Social Sciences choices into two groups but collapse into one.**

The Core Curriculum and General Education Committee voted not to endorse the GETF recommendation relative to the science sequence and recommend maintaining the sequence. It is the view of the majority of the members of the committee that students will achieve the student learning outcomes related to scientific literacy best through one lab science sequence as opposed to completing two separate lab courses.