

Ronald Alan Royer  
*General Education*

Da: 21 April, 1997  
To: Eric Clausen,  
President of the Faculty Senate  
Re: General Education Committee Final Report

This memorandum and its attachments constitute a final report on the activities of the General Education Committee for the 1996-97 academic year.

Last year, chairs and faculty from all general education academic areas participated in developing five-strand language for their respective academic units. Last spring the General Education Committee ended its year's work by formally scheduling and restating the schedule of its review of all general education coursework under a four-year rotation, as approved by the senate in the 1994-95 academic year (see attached "standard operating procedures" document). Firm deadlines for re-approval of existing general education courses were then set in the schedule shown below. The first cycle is being based on course-by-course address of the new five-strand general education review system. As you will recall, that system is intended to render the wide variety of general education courses amenable to uniform assessment, as prescribed by NCA accreditation criteria. Accordingly, in order to continue as a general education offering virtually every general education course will have been through this review process by December 1997, and must therefore have subjected both its syllabus and its assessment plans to committee- and senate-approved concordance with the five-strand statements of its own academic department or division.

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Table I. Deadlines for review and approval of general education course proposals by existing general education category.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Application Deadline</u>	<u>Deadline for <b>Approval</b></u>	<u>Person Responsible</u>
Communication	--	December 15, 1996	George Slanger
History	--	December 15, 1996	Jonathan Wagner
Humanities	February 15, 1997	May 1, 1997	George Slanger
Mathematics	February 15, 1997	May 1, 1997	Bob Holmen
Natural Sciences	October 15, 1997	December 15, 1997	Rand Rodewald
Social Sciences	October 15, 1997	December 15, 1997	Pat Lomire
Wellness	October 15, 1997	December 15, 1997	Gary Leslie

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Under the above schedule, faculty have used both (A) the university-wide "umbrella" goal statements that were approved last year by the General Education Committee and presented to the Faculty Senate in its 1995-96 annual report, and (B) their departmental/divisional goal statements, also presented last year to the Faculty Senate in the committee's final report, as a guide in 1) fashioning specific general education course objective statements, and 2) defining mechanisms for assessing and monitoring their success in meeting those objectives. The intention has been to use a uniform "ruler" in assessment of all courses alleging themselves "general," in lieu of employing some outside, normative assessment vehicle for meeting NCA program assessment demands for general education.

I am pleased to report that the General Education Committee has completed its review on schedule for all communication, history, mathematics and humanities course proposals that it has received. Far fewer courses were presented for evaluation than have heretofore been on the general education list. All applications were for four-year renewal of already standing general education courses. Some of those were rejected by the committee because they failed satisfactorily to address the question of ongoing course assessment (as opposed to student assessment, which is assumed of any good course). (Course/program assessment, after all, was the purpose of the review.). This process thus is resulting in a remarkably more compact, uniform, focused, and assessable general education program. General education courses approved for renewal during this academic year are as follows:

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Table II. Courses approved by the General Education Committee in the 1996-97 academic year. (Asterisked items are being presented by Dr. Slanger for final approval at this meeting.)

Com 103, 150, 290  
Hist 123, 124, 143, 144  
Math 120, 130, 160, 165  
\* Art 101, 314, 315  
Engl 101, 102, 223, 261, 262, 271, 272  
Hum 251, 252, 253, 254  
\* Lang 101, 102, 201, 202 (french)  
\* Lang 121, 122, 221, 222 (german)  
\* Lang 141, 142, 241, 242 (spanish)  
\* Lang 161, 162 (japanese)  
\* Mus 253, 254  
\* Phil 180, 182

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It is important to note that by prior Faculty Senate directive, existing general education status for all present courses formally ceases to exist after the dates in Table 1, unless the Faculty Senate has approved proposals conveyed by the General Education Committee under the new system. As noted in two separate letters to department/division chairpersons, *"each course intended for listing as a general education offering in the 1998-2000 catalog must have gained General Education Committee approval by the above-stated deadline, and also must have*

*gained Faculty Senate approval before the printing deadline for the 1998-2000 catalog.* Courses approved under the schedule in Table 1 will be reviewed after four years, then primarily on their success in having employed their proposed assessment methods and in having used such findings to improve course content and delivery.

The recent senate action on Dr. McCormack's substitute motion unfortunately has muddied those waters considerably, and I regret to report that next year's committee faces an uncertain situation as to how the "strands" system is to be applied in evaluating further proposals. In the interest of effecting this difficult transition, three years worth of documentation plus all of the presently approved course applications and syllabi have been assembled into a red binder that is being passed on to Dale Elhard, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, who is a permanent *ex officio* member of this committee, for conveyance to next year's General Education Committee chair. The above-indicated deadlines remain in effect for the social sciences, the natural sciences, and the leisure time courses for next fall semester. These areas must have offered course proposals to the General Education Committee by 15 October next fall -- just before NCA comes to the campus -- and must also have gained Faculty Senate approval by 15 December 1997 in order to appear in the 1998-2000 Undergraduate Catalog.

In an advisory capacity, the committee also reviewed a number of applications for general education transfer, both independent petitions and those referred to MSU under GERTA.

Because of the relatively large number of resignations and opened positions on the committee, members voted at their last meeting today to leave election of a 1997-98 chairperson to the new committee. Dale Elhard has agreed to convene the first meeting next year and to transmit these documents to the new chairperson. A diskette provided to Dean Elhardt contains all forms and other documents from the past three years of work. These are formatted in Microsoft Word for Macintosh, version 5.1a. (I will also retain an archival file of this material in case the new chair requires translation to some other electronic format.)

I firmly believe that this is one of the most important committees in the university, and it has been an honor to serve these past two years as its chairman. For that privilege I wish wholeheartedly to thank my colleagues who served on the committee during my term of office. They have dealt admirably with some very difficult issues, and their integrity during the process has been absolutely above reproach.

Sincerely,

Ronald A. Royer, Chairman  
General Education Committee