

Community  
College  
*of* Philadelphia  
*The Path to Possibilities™*

Academic Affairs

General Education/Core Competency  
Guidelines

October 2011

## Message from the Vice President for Academic Affairs

In Fall 2009, Community College of Philadelphia implemented new general education requirements identified and approved by faculty. These requirements were created after many years of discussion and hard work by faculty who are committed to ensuring that graduates of the College's degree programs have academic experiences that prepare them for either transfer or for careers. The general education requirements at the College apply to all degree students, regardless of the path they choose for their education.

Subsequent to creating the requirements, faculty and administrators worked over a two year period to identify ways to assess whether students actually develop the attitudes, knowledge and behaviors expected through general education. One result of this process was to nest the general education requirements under a set of Core Competencies. Afterwards faculty made minor changes to the Core Competencies as well as adjustments to the timeline for assessment. Our core competencies now provide a way for the College to review whether students are meeting faculty expectations for general education.

By working through this process of revising general education, different documents were created at various points in time. The purpose of this document is to pull together information from the multiple College sources into guidelines that clarify the current status of general education/core competencies. These guidelines reflect practices already established for implementing the general education requirements and explain how, using current College structures, changes can be made to general education/core competencies. Finally, these guidelines provide a procedure for ongoing review of general education.

As is always the case, many people have contributed to this effort over many years. We can all be proud that we have reached the point at which we can determine whether the faculty's prescription for a quality education is reflected in our student outcomes.

# General Education/Core Competencies

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## General Education Requirements

The College is committed to providing all graduates of its associate's degree programs exposure to a breadth of traditional arts and science disciplines, as well as assisting them to develop competence in information literacy and technological competency. The College's general education requirements were revised and became effective Fall 2009.

To meet the general education requirements the College expects all degree-seeking students to complete courses in the following four areas:

### 1. Courses in Major Areas of Learning

- ENGL101 and ENGL102 or ENGL112
- 3 credit hours in Humanities ( ENGL 101, 102 and 112 may not be used to fulfill this requirement)
- 3 credit hours in Social Sciences
- 3 credit hours in Mathematics (at Math 118 or above)
- 3 credit hours in Natural Sciences

### 2. Courses in Major Academic Approaches

- 3 credit hours in a Writing Intensive course
- 3 credit hours in an Interpretive Studies course
- 3 credit hours in an American Diversity/Global Diversity Studies course

### 3. Information Literacy

The current information literacy requirement is met by ENGL 102. However, a curriculum may demonstrate that its students attain Information Literacy within a course or embedded within the curriculum.

### 4. Technological Competency

The technological competency requirement is met by CIS 103 or by other approved coursework.

## Completing Requirements

A single course may be used to fulfill multiple General Education Requirements.

For example:

- Courses used to fulfill requirements in major areas of learning (Social Sciences, Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Science and English 101, 102 or 112) may be used to fulfill requirements in major academic approaches.
- A course may not be used to fulfill more than one requirement in major areas of learning.

- A course may fulfill more than one requirement in major academic approaches

### Definitions for Major Areas of Learning

**Social Science:** A course that fulfills the Social Sciences requirement is a college-level course that focuses on the study of human behavior and/or the relationships of people within societies.

**Humanities:** A course that fulfills the Humanities requirement is a college-level course that emphasizes analysis and exchange of ideas related to human experience, using analytical, critical, or speculative methods. The methods in Humanities differ from the creative expression of the arts or the empirical approaches of the sciences.

**Mathematics:** A course that fulfills the Mathematics requirement is designed to promote a solid foundation for the interpretation and understanding of the world through numbers or other measures, using deductive logic, with a synthetic or analytic approach. Courses that focus on the analysis of and drawing of inductive inferences from quantitative data can satisfy this requirement, provided they have a sufficiently prominent deductive component. Math courses at the level of 118 and above fulfill the Mathematics requirement.

**Natural Science:** A course that fulfills the Natural Science requirement is a college-level course, designed to use the scientific method to understand and describe the natural world. Natural sciences include biology, chemistry, earth science, physics, and multi-disciplinary courses such as Science, Technology, and Society.

### Definitions for Major Academic Approaches

**Writing Intensive:** A Writing Intensive Course is a college-level course designed to integrate the teaching of writing with the teaching of specific subject matter. Writing Intensive Courses are offered across the curriculum and may overlap with other degree requirements. A Writing Intensive Course should include the practice of general forms of academic or creative writing or the introduction of specific forms of academic writing common to the discipline or set of disciplines pertaining to the course. The course should approach writing as a process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

**Interpretive Studies:** An Interpretive Studies Course is a college-level course designed to focus on the study, analysis, and interpretation of “primary sources,” defined as those written documents, material artifacts, visual works, and musical works closest to the subject under investigation or created in the historical period or culture under study. In addition, relevant case studies and field research contained within a syllabus would be considered an interpretive endeavor.

**American/Global Diversity:** An American/Global Diversity Studies Course is a college-level course designed to focus on either the comparative study of race/ethnicity, gender and gender relations, class, and/or religion in the United States (American Diversity), the study of a country, culture, civilization, or region outside the United States or a comparative analysis of countries, systems, or cultures outside the United States, or the study of a language other than English (Global Diversity). These courses prepare students to function effectively in a democratic society

by helping them to understand the complexities and differences among the people of the United States or the complexities and differences between the cultures, languages and history of the United States and other regions of the world.

### Definitions of Information Literacy and Technological Competency

**Information Literacy:** Information Literacy is defined as the ability to determine the extent of a need for information, access it effectively and efficiently, evaluate it critically, incorporate the information into a knowledge base, accomplish a specific purpose with it, and access and use this information ethically and legally. Information literacy includes proficiency in *acquisition* (finding, assessing, and utilizing repositories of information, both traditional and electronic) and *integration* (critically evaluating, digesting, and synthesizing information from disparate sources).

**Technological Competency:** Technological Competency is defined by six goals approved through the College governance structure and effective Fall 2010:

- Goal 1 - Graduates will be able to use word processing software to produce academic and professional documents, individually and working in collaboration with others.
- Goal 2 - Graduates will be able to use electronic spreadsheets to organize, analyze and present data.
- Goal 3 - Graduates will be able to use library information systems.
- Goal 4 - Graduates will be able to use collaboration and social networking software for academic, professional, and personal use. They will be able to create Web pages from application software documents, and share those documents with others by posting them on the Web.
- Goal 5 - Graduates will be able to connect personal computers to related equipment, such as printers, cell phones, PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants) and digital cameras, and to a wireless computer network in a secure manner.
- Goal 6 - Graduates will demonstrate an understanding of common ethical issues related to the use of information technology system and the handling of data, including privacy and security issues.

### The Link Between General Education and Core Competencies

The College's general education requirements were nested under core competencies upon creation of the College's Learning Outcomes Assessment Model (2008). Students who complete the general education requirements develop the following:

- Effective Communication
- Critical Thinking

- Quantitative Reasoning
- Scientific Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Technological Competency
- Responsible Citizenship.

### General Education/Core Competency Oversight

The Director of Academic Assessment and Evaluation is responsible for coordinating assessment of general education/core competencies. Academic Department Heads serve as a General Education/Core Competency oversight group. Department Heads review results of assessments and make decisions about follow-up based on the data. Between hearing the results of assessments and making a decision, Department Heads have time to discuss the data with department faculty and to solicit their feedback.

Once a course is approved as meeting a general education requirement, department heads are responsible for ensuring that all faculty teaching the course are adhering to course requirements.

### Changes to General Education/Core Competencies

#### 1. Designation as meeting a major area of learning

Faculty who believe a course meets the definition for a major area of learning present a rationale to their department head and dean for review and support. Upon agreement, if necessary, the dean presents the rationale to the dean of the appropriate area as follows: Humanities and Social Science requests go to the Dean of Liberal Studies; Mathematics and Science requests go to the Dean of Math, Science and Health Careers. The dean consults the department head in the related discipline(s). The rationale and recommendation (whether positive or negative) of the dean requesting the change are presented to the Academic Affairs Council. A recommendation from the Academic Affairs Council is made to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs is final. Supporting documentation of any change will be filed in the Curriculum Facilitation Office.

#### 2. Designation as meeting a major academic approach

New or revised courses must include an explanation of how the course meets the requirement(s) within the course document. There must be a student learning outcome that corresponds to the requirement. Departments work through the Curriculum Facilitation Team to prepare the document. Courses approved by departments are presented to the appropriate academic dean for review and approval. The dean presents an approved course to the Academic Affairs Council (AAC). An approved course is recommended by the Vice President for Academic Affairs to the President of the College.

The President's decision is final. Supporting documentation of any change will be filed in the Curriculum Facilitation Office.

Existing courses that do not require revision may petition to have the course approved as meeting a major academic approach by providing documentation to the dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs is final. Supporting documentation of any change will be filed in the Curriculum Facilitation Office.

3. Designation as meeting the Information Literacy Requirement outside of ENGL 102

Faculty may petition that a course or combination of required courses in a degree program meet the information literacy requirement by presenting a rationale to the department head and dean. Upon agreement, the dean presents the recommendation to the Academic Affairs Council. The Vice President for Academic Affairs reviews the recommendation of the Academic Affairs Council. The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs is final. Supporting documentation of any change will be filed in the Curriculum Facilitation Office.

4. Designation as meeting the Technological Competency Requirement outside of CIS 103

Faculty may petition that a course or combination of required courses in a degree program meet the technological competency requirement by presenting a rationale to the department head and dean. Upon agreement, the dean presents the recommendation to the Academic Affairs Council. The Vice President for Academic Affairs reviews the recommendation of the Academic Affairs Council. The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs is final. Supporting documentation of any change will be filed in the Curriculum Facilitation Office.

5. Changes to General Education/Core Competency Standards

Faculty may petition to change aspects of the College's general education/core competency requirements or to redefine general education/core competency requirements. Such changes must go through the College governance process of Academic Affairs Council; Curriculum Committee; Institution Wide Committee. The recommendation of the Institution Wide Committee is presented to the President of the College. The decision of the President is final. Supporting documentation of any change will be filed in the Curriculum Facilitation Office.

### Review of General Education/Core Competencies

Every five years, the department heads will identify a committee to review general education/core competency requirements and make a recommendation to maintain the requirements or to embark on a revision of the requirements.