

**Undergraduate Curriculum Committee**

**A Plan For General Education at Queens College**

October 2005

**Summary:**

At the Academic Senate meeting of October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005 concern was raised during the discussion of the Area Requirements about voting for the new General Education requirements piecemeal rather than as an entire package. It is reasonable to have an overall view of the complete General Education requirements so that the sum of the credit requirements for each piece remains manageable.

While the UCC cannot predict what the form of any requirements will be, a pattern of the package has begun to form around four basic components of what may become the new General Education requirements: (1) Primary College Competencies, (2) an Entry Experience (3) Area Requirements, and (4) a senior capstone course now in the guise of a “synthesis course.”

The Committee proposes a “plug and play” approach to this problem, establishing a minimum and maximum number of credits that would be required for each of the four areas. Thus, in principle, boundaries are placed on the future incarnation of each of the four areas with respect to the number of credits required. The following table summarizes current and new minima and maxima.

	<b>Current Minimum-Maximum Credits</b>	<b>New Minimum-Maximum Credits Current thinking/ Possible changes</b>
<b>Primary College Competencies</b>		
English 110	3	3
Mathematics	0-3	3
Foreign Language	0-11	0-11/ 3-11
Physical Education	1-3	0/ 3
<b>Entry Experience</b>	0	0/ 3
<b>Area Requirements</b>	27-31	24/ 27
<b>Capstone/ Synthesis</b>	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31-51</b>	<b>33-44/ 45-53</b>

**Rationale:**

Naturally, one wonders how the numbers under the “New” column were created. The answer is based on using what we have done under the old requirements as a pattern, and the distillation of many conversations since the arrival of the General Education Task Force report.

***English 110.***

There is considerable agreement on campus that basic English composition at the college level is an essential requirement to be taken as early as possible in the student’s academic career.

***Mathematics***

There is no required course at Queens College for mathematics. Students may satisfy the mathematics requirement in various ways (placement, Regents exams, AP tests) or by achieving a passing grade in Mathematics 110 or a pre-calculus or calculus course. The weakness of this requirement is a consistent theme in discussions on campus, and the solution is a college-level mathematics requirement of at most three credits. What it might be is unsure. However, poor performance on the data analysis part of the CPE and

conversations with faculty in the Science Division lead to the thought that algebra and trigonometry are necessary (they are the minimum requirement for QC) but not sufficient.

### ***Foreign Language***

There has been a great deal of discussion about the foreign language requirement since the emergence of the General Education Task Force's Report. That is, should there be more? less? or a different kind of foreign language requirement. Currently students need not take any foreign language at QC as there are a variety of ways to demonstrate competency at the third-semester level (Completion of three years at the high school level, or a passing grade on the Level 3 Regent's exam, or a competency examination in a native foreign language. Recent discussions suggest that these paths for a waiver are too weak, and there should be some college-level exposure to foreign language required of all students.

### ***Physical Education***

The General Education Task Force report suggested no physical education requirement, and, so we've been told, Queens College is the only CUNY school left with one. Suggestions from the FNES department include a course in wellness and health (rather than the current requirement of something like tennis). The table above leaves room for a three credit requirement as was strongly supported by the student body during a discussion of the UCC's first response to the Gen Ed Task Force Report.

### ***Entry Experience***

The Entry Experience receive a lot of discussion after the Gen Ed and UCC reports came out. The problem here is implementing such a requirement that can be meaningful (well-staffed with small sections) yet affordable. The UCC has not begun to develop a proposal for this, but leaves three credits in the table for the possibility.

### ***Area Requirements***

The current area requirements proposal is 8 courses (24 credits). We leave room in the table for a ninth course as discussion of these requirements continues. This may be necessary, for example, if the overlapping courses in the current proposal present too much complication, or an additional area is added as a result of continuing conversations with faculty and students.

### ***Capstone/Synthesis***

Perhaps the most creative part of the Gen Ed Task Force report is the notion that students should be able to "put it all together" in a senior-level course that looks at a topic or a problem from two different perspectives. The Senate has approved a pilot program for developing synthesis courses, and these courses should be offered starting in Fall 2006. We leave three credits in the table for such a requirement, even though the pilot program may shed a different light on the requirement.