

Public Statement on UMBC's General Education Program (GEP) for UMBC catalog and other publications, web page, etc.

UMBC's General Education Program provides students the opportunity to expand the life of the mind by developing life-long habits of thought and intellectual interests. The course requirements for General Education allow students to explore a variety of academic disciplines and to acquire and apply skills and competencies essential for a well-educated citizen. They also provide the foundation for effective writing, which is necessary for all fields of study.

1. The Distribution Requirement

For General Education, UMBC students will complete courses distributed in four broad areas of academic inquiry: Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Mathematics and Science, and Language and Culture. General Education courses are designed to introduce students to the knowledge and methods that are foundations of each of these four areas.

UMBC's General Education courses also enable students to develop functional skills and competencies important for academic and lifetime success. These include one or more of the following: written and oral communication; scientific and quantitative reasoning; critical analysis and reasoning; technological competency; and information literacy (recommended competency areas for General Education Programs have been established by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and adopted by the Maryland Higher Education Commission for Maryland colleges and universities).

Students must successfully complete the following distribution requirements:

Arts and Humanities (3 courses, in at least two academic fields):

Arts courses teach students to critically evaluate and interpret aesthetic content, to understand creative expression and practice, and to engage in direct experience with the arts. These courses include both substantial creative activity and studies that develop interpretive skills within, or across, modes of expression. A wide range of courses, focusing on the study of, or participation in, artistic activity, fulfills this requirement.

GEP courses in the Arts enable students to:

- develop skills and techniques basic to dance, theatre, music or the visual arts;
- apply skills and techniques in the creation of artistic work;
- perform or exhibit and critique artistic work through a collaborative process.

The Humanities explore the human condition and its expression in cultural forms, past and present. Through critical examination of a wide variety of sources—drawn from subject areas ranging from literature and philosophy to popular culture and patterns of everyday life—the Humanities foster an understanding of significant intellectual issues related to fundamental human values.

GEP courses in the Humanities enable students to:

- analyze and interpret diverse texts and sources;
- explore and understand important intellectual issues related to human experience, in historical perspective as well as in their relevance for contemporary life;
- discuss and write effectively about the Humanities.

Social Sciences (3 courses, in at least two academic fields):

The Social Sciences seek to understand attitudes, beliefs, and social behaviors of individuals, groups, and institutions, and identify factors that influence them, both past and present. Attention is devoted to the complex interactions among individuals, environment, and social institutions. Finally, the social sciences seek to develop, implement, and evaluate procedures that can change attitudes and behaviors at both the individual and group level and address issues of social inequality/inequity.

GEP courses in the Social Sciences enable students to:

- critically evaluate research regarding the complex interplay of individuals, groups, and institutions;
- understand the strengths and weaknesses of, and be able to apply research methods within, the many fields of social sciences;
- provide insight into the development and implementation of programs and policies designed to improve people's lives.

Sciences (2 courses, one with a laboratory component):

The Sciences seek explanations for how nature functions at scales ranging from the subatomic to the universal. Courses in the natural sciences foster an understanding of the fundamental principles underlying modern scientific thought. In addition to describing what is currently known, science courses teach skills and methods that facilitate inquiry about the natural world, and provide opportunities for students to test those explanations against current scientific knowledge and to communicate their ideas to others.

GEP courses in the Sciences enable students to:

- apply their knowledge to solving basic scientific problems;
- describe what it means to “do” science;
- distinguish science from non-science or pseudoscience;
- use mathematics as appropriate to present and analyze scientific data;
- discuss socially relevant issues in scientific terms.

Mathematics (one course)

To prepare college graduates for an increasingly complex and technological world it is necessary to develop problem solving abilities, including analytical and logical reasoning skills. Mathematics GEP courses build upon a student's fundamental mastery of high school algebra (as evidenced by the placement exam or equivalent course work) to

provide a foundation in mathematical concepts and techniques used not only in Mathematics and Statistics but also in a wide variety of other disciplines.

GEP courses in Mathematics enable students to:

- develop a level of mathematical maturity significantly beyond high school Algebra II;
- develop problem-solving ability both in the quantitative and qualitative realms;
- enhance their analytic and synthetic logical abilities;
- become acquainted with mathematical ways of thinking, including concepts and techniques utilized in other disciplines.

Language and Culture

(For the B.A. degree: a single Language through the 201 level or equivalent proficiency and 2 Culture courses; for the B.S. or B.S.E. degrees: a single Language through the 201 level or equivalent proficiency and 1 Culture course)

The Language and Culture requirements recognize the global nature of society in the 21st Century, the importance of inter-cultural communication, and the need for modern citizens to broaden their horizons. Languages beyond English offered in the UMBC curriculum range from ancient to modern, representing most major language groups of the world. Courses designated for the Culture requirement generally focus on subject matter beyond the borders of the United States, while recognizing the multi-cultural perspectives of global experience and the value of inter-cultural and comparative approaches to culture study.

GEP courses in Language and Culture enable students to:

- develop skills in languages other than English that are necessary for cross-cultural comprehension and communication;
- explore and understand diverse systems of practices, values, and beliefs;
- think in ways that provide perspectives on international and cultural issues.

2. The Writing Requirement

UMBC's General Education Program requires every student to successfully complete a) Freshman Composition, and b) a designated Writing Intensive course.

A) Freshman Composition (English 100)

English 100 provides instruction in crafting essays in a workshop setting. In all of its variations, this course develops students' abilities to address various audiences and rhetorical situations in competently structured essays. This course helps students to analyze critically electronic and print resources for research for essays. Through this course, students are introduced to writing for an academic audience.

B) Writing Intensive Course (WI)

Students must complete one Writing Intensive course; a designated WI course may count for the major or a distribution requirement, or it may be taken as an elective.

Writing intensive courses

- engage students in writing as a form of critical inquiry and scholarly research;
- require students to write frequently both, in and/or out of class;
- provide useful feedback to students regarding their writing;
- discuss the work students are doing as writers at various points during the term.

3. General Education PLUS [Personal Learning for UMBC Students]

UMBC encourages first-year students, whether freshmen or transfer students, to participate in programs designed to complement their General Education experience, to facilitate and enrich their transition to university study, and to foster their academic success. The First-Year Seminars, frequently involving interdisciplinary inquiry, are small, discussion-oriented classes that develop academic skills and focus on topics which explore important intellectual issues. First-Year Seminars commonly provide General Education credit in one of the four distribution areas. Also, the Honors College, Living Learning Communities, and UMBC's Scholars programs provide comparable experiences to students through seminars and course work developed for first year students. In addition, "Success Seminars" attached to sections of selected introductory courses are designed to emphasize skill development and understanding of academic expectations.

The report by the General Education Committee on revisions to the UMBC General Education Program (GEP) was approved by the Faculty Senate at its meeting on March 29, 2004; the Interim General Education Committee, charged by the Faculty Senate to develop documents regarding implementation of the new General Education Program, included this Public Statement on General Education in its report to the Faculty Senate on April 12, 2005.