

Date: May 11, 1999
To: University Senate
From: Undergraduate Council

The Motion

The Undergraduate Council moves to amend the legislation on group requirements passed by the Senate in 1998. That legislation, with proposed additions in italics, is on page three. The most significant amendment requires that group satisfying courses be resubmitted for renewal of their group status every five years.

Background for the Motion

The recertification process for the University of Oregon culminated in a report calling for a more coherent general education program. The Undergraduate Council has been discussing this call since it began meeting in the spring of 1998.

The motion below focuses on group requirements. Two pieces of prior legislation established the current requirements. Basic policy was set in legislation passed in 1981, which is included in an appendix to this document. The Senate passed a refinement of that policy in the spring of 1998, and the current motion further refines that legislation.

When the University had a cluster system, committees carefully examined proposed clusters, but stand alone courses were often treated as an afterthought. Then clusters were eliminated, producing our current system with a large array of courses that in many cases were never measured against the letter or the spirit of the 1981 legislation.

The 1998 legislation attempted to solve this problem for new courses. Small committees were drafted to write descriptions of group satisfying courses in each of the three areas. New courses introduced after 1998 have been measured against the descriptions written by these committees. The committees were

Arts and Letters

John Gage, English
Kenneth Helphand, AAA
Robert Hurwitz, Music
Stephen Kohl, East Asian Languages
Grant McKernie, Theatre Arts

Social Science

Toby Edson, Education
John Frazer, Journalism
Alex Murphy, Geography
John Orbell, Political Science
Jean Stockard, Sociology

Science

Peter von Hippel, Chemistry

Brian Matthews, Physics

K. J. Park, Physics

Mike Posner, Psychology

Franklin Stahl, Biology

The most important change in the motion we are presenting to you is a requirement that group satisfying courses be resubmitted for renewal of their group status every five years. Consequently, *all* courses will be measured against the new descriptions.

During the spring term of 1999, the Undergraduate Council wrote and adopted a Purpose Statement for General Education at the University of Oregon. This statement is reprinted below and referred to in the new motion. Oversight committees may use both the purpose statement and the three descriptions of group satisfying courses to certify courses for group status.

The legislation is conservative. Students need not keep track of old requirements vs new ones, and the registrar need not reprogram the computer.

The 1998 legislation, with proposed additions in bold italics.

1. Group satisfying courses proposed by departments or individual faculty must be reviewed by both the College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee and the University Curriculum Committee before submission to the Senate.

2. Group satisfying courses must be numbered at the 100, 200, and 300 levels. Lower division courses must be offered annually, and upper division courses at least biannually. Approved courses must be at least 3 credits each.

3. Upper division group satisfying courses must provide depth and rigor beyond that of typical lower-division general education courses.

Departments must justify, in terms of content, workload, and method of instruction, the assignment of a course to the upper level.

3. No more than three courses with the same subject code may be counted by a student as satisfying group requirements.

4. Group satisfying courses in Arts and Letters, Social Science, and Science must meet the following criteria:

Group satisfying courses in arts and letters must create meaningful opportunities for students to engage actively in the modes of inquiry that define a discipline. Proposed courses must be demonstrably liberal in nature and broad in scope. Though some courses may focus on specialized subjects or approaches, there must be a substantial course content locating that subject in the broader context of the major issues of the discipline. Qualifying courses will not focus on teaching basic skills but will require the application or engagement of those skills through analysis and interpretation.

Group satisfying courses in the social sciences must be liberal in nature rather than professionally oriented or devoted in substantial measure to the performance of professional skills. They must cover a representative cross-section of key issues, perspectives, and modes of analysis employed by scholars working on the subject matter addressed by the course. The subject matter of the course will be relatively broad, e.g. involving more than one issue, place, or time. Courses with an emphasis on methods and skills will satisfy the requirement only if there is also a substantial and coherent theoretical component.

Group satisfying courses in the sciences should introduce students to the foundations of one or more scientific disciplines, or provide a scientific perspective on a major problem facing society, or provide an introduction to scientific methods (including the use of mathematics and computers) used within or among disciplines.

In particular:

Courses designed primarily for majors are not excluded a priori from group status.

Learning first year German could not qualify for group status in arts and letters, but reading Goethe in German might.

Courses in methods or statistical analysis are excluded in the social sciences, but courses in theory construction are acceptable.

Laboratory courses are not excluded from group-satisfying status in the sciences.

6. Each request that a course be given group satisfying status must include a statement identifying the parts of the Purpose Statement for General Education Requirements at the University of Oregon that are covered by the course.

7. Departments which offer several general education courses should suggest groupings or sequences of these courses that present the most coherent development of knowledge and skills. The department's suggestions shall be included, for advising purposes, in the Green Book and in the Faculty Advising Manual.

8. Group satisfying courses must be resubmitted for renewal of their group-satisfying status by the College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee and then the University Committee on Courses. Reviews will be conducted on a five year cycle. The committees will select departments whose group offerings are to be reviewed each year, and request information essential for the review. At the committees' discretion, this information may include frequency of course offerings, course syllabi, statements explaining the manner in which courses meet conditions set forth in this motion, and an overview of the department's group offerings.

Purpose Statement for General Education Requirements at the University of Oregon

(adopted by the Undergraduate Council; spring, 1999)

The liberal arts and sciences form the foundation of the general education curriculum at the University of Oregon. The general education curriculum prizes a common educational experience for all students, and offers opportunities for mastery of linguistic, analytic and computational skills, as well as the development of aesthetic values. It fosters personal development and an expanded view of self. It offers a breadth of knowledge and a variety of modes of inquiry. It strives for coherence of learning through integration and synthesis. It seeks to impart enthusiasm for learning. It emphasizes critical thinking, logic, and effective reasoning along with a healthy skepticism. It encourages appreciation of heritage and culture and examines values and controversial issues.

The University of Oregon, as a comprehensive research university, offers opportunities through general education to develop an understanding of and appreciation for:

1. the centrality of effective communication and language facility
 - * oral and written communication
 - * group, interpersonal and technological communication
2. the moral foundations of human interaction
 - * ethical judgment, personal and social responsibility
 - * the increasing interdependence and diversity of world cultures
 - * the consequences of current actions and policies
3. the nature of the historical past and its relationship to the present
 - * the common concerns and diverse responses of societies, past and present
 - * historical approaches to understanding contemporary issues
4. the diversity of human experience through the study of various cultures
 - * culture and its tangible achievements
 - * creative expression
 - * critical approaches
 - * aesthetic standards
 - * oral and written histories

5. the importance of modern sciences and technology
 - * science as an interrelated body of knowledge, rather than a collection of isolated facts
 - * scientific methods of discovery
 - * scientific perspectives on major problems facing society
 - * quantitative reasoning and computational skills

6. the fundamentals and interrelationship of the human mind and body
 - * human behavior
 - * perception and cognition
 - * diverse modes of thought and creativity
 - * self awareness
 - * health and physical activity

Courses approved for general education provide perspectives that encourage students to integrate knowledge and develop skills which will enable them to pursue further knowledge effectively.

Appendix 1: Complete copy of the 1981 legislation:

I. Group satisfying courses or clusters proposed by departments or individual faculty must be revised by both the College Course and University Curriculum Committees before submission to the University Assembly as a whole. Proposals to the committees will be accepted and screened once or twice annually and not on a random basis.

II. Guidelines.

A. All group-satisfying courses must be liberal in nature and not professionally oriented or devoted in substantial measure to the performance of skills. In addition, they must be introductory in nature and broadly, as opposed to peripherally, related to the overall concepts and modes of thought encompassed by their discipline. Further, these courses will be offered annually or bi-annually, be numbered at the 100, 200, and 300 levels, and not be designed primarily for majors. All group satisfying courses will be starred with an asterisk in the University catalogue.

B. No more than three courses in a single department may be counted by a student as satisfying group requirements.

C. Group Satisfying Clusters.

1. Normally cluster courses will be taught by regular faculty, not by GTF's.

2. Departmental clusters should be few in number and should introduce the student to a broad spectrum of thought encompassed by the discipline while, at the same time, attempting to build a degree of depth of understanding not normally possible in stand alone courses.

3. Interdisciplinary clusters must adhere to the general education guidelines outlined in (A). Moreover, the common thread of courses comprising such a cluster must be clear and of broad significance to liberal education. All departments proposing courses as parts of an interdisciplinary cluster must demonstrate continuity and compatibility of individual courses forming the cluster. A member of the CAS Course Committee will oversee and evaluate each cluster annually to help ensure viability. The evaluation will be based on successful course scheduling and solicited evaluations from teaching faculty and students concerning the cluster as a whole. Recommendation will be made to the faculty as a whole.

D. Stand Alone Courses.

Stand alone courses must comply with the general guidelines in section (A) and normally these courses will be taught by regular faculty.