

**Perspectives on Diversity  
General Education Element**

**Supporting Information  
Fall 2012**

*Labeling a Course as Fulfilling a GenEd Element*

When teaching any course as fulfilling a General Education element, it is important to clearly state within your syllabus the type of requirement met. An important goal is for students to be able to understand the connections and purposes that underlie the General Education curriculum, and move it beyond a simple checklist of completion. Faculty may choose how they wish to provide this information to students. For example:

- a) Add the descriptor code to the course title: *ANTH 102: Introduction to Human Cultural Diversity C, SO*
- b) Include a statement within the first several paragraphs of the syllabus: *This course meets the Perspectives on Diversity/Cross Cultural element requirement (C) and the Investigating Human Behavior, Culture, and Institutions element requirement (SO).*
- c) Include wording from the element description below.

*Providing Clear Goals and Objectives for the Element*

Because of its interdisciplinary nature (as opposed to all other GenEd elements as housed within particular disciplines), The Perspectives on Diversity element has an explicit set of supporting goals and objectives. In most cases, faculty have included goals and objectives for their course that are easily aligned; often, particular department goals are also easily aligned. Please insure that appropriate goals and objectives for this element are clearly stated, and that there are direct assessments that help to demonstrate that students are meeting these goals and objectives. These objectives are available on the General Education website as well as on the Office of the Provost website (both in Documents and Forms).

I. Overall Educational Objectives

The goal of this requirement is to promote an awareness that different cultural perspectives exist within **our own society and around the world**. Ultimately, these courses should give students critical tools for assessing values within a cultural context. Viewing our own values in the larger comparative context should facilitate the kind of introspection that allows students to question values and arrive at informed commitments.

- Acquire knowledge about different cultural and social perspectives and traditions.
- Study coherence as well as variations within a culture, group, or knowledge tradition.
- Gain respect and appreciation for a range of values, norms, behaviors, and attitudes.
- Develop an understanding of the dynamics of values formation and change.

- Expand their appreciation of accomplishments and contributions of different groups through the study of a range of cultural expressions.
- Identify their own cultural heritages and knowledge traditions and compare them with others.
- Assess the sources of their assumptions about alternative groups and examine the impact of such assumptions on the valuing of others.
- Increase their ability to cross cultural and social boundaries and interact effectively with multiple groups.
- Increase their facility with “perspective-taking,” seeing events and situations from diverse points of view.
- Broaden, challenge, and complicate their worldviews.

*Note: It is recommended that, wherever appropriate, readings and source materials include material coming from or giving “voice” to the groups considered. Also, in keeping with the innovative spirit of this requirement, instructors are encouraged to incorporate pedagogical innovations.*

## II. Alternative Perspectives

*“A course which creates an awareness and understanding of diversity in the **United States**, directly addressing issues such as ethnicity, gender, disability, racism, or poverty.”*

To accomplish the above, courses should include three components:

- The study of minority/majority relations with a focus on how underrepresented or minority perspectives differ from mainstream or majority perspectives.
- Attention to the positive contributions of alternative groups, whose **voices** are heard through inclusion of materials generated by those groups.
- A unit relating course issues to the situation in the United States.

## III. Cross-cultural Perspectives

*“A course that enhances cross-cultural understandings through examination of other cultures.”*

This requirement may be satisfied in one of three ways:

- A course focusing on the culture of **non-Euro-American** societies.
- A 201 or higher-level course in a language used to satisfy the admission requirement or 8 credits in a language not previously studied.

Participation in an approved semester-long study abroad program.

Rationale for the three options: Option One focuses on a non-Euro-American culture to expose students to a very different culture. Option Two requires a more intimate examination of the different culture by the study of the culture through its language. Option Three requires the student to experience a different culture.

To accomplish the above, courses should include two components:

An element that relates the focal aspects of the course to the larger cultural context.

An element that raises awareness of cultural differences.

*Note: the course must treat the perspectives and experiences of the selected group primarily as the subject of the course and not primarily as objects of analysis.*

#### *Understanding the General Education Program at PLU*

PLU's General Education Program provides a robust foundation in the liberal arts for all students. The following description of the PLU General Education Program introduces the elements and their requirements. As the catalog describes the program:

“PLU's General Education Program prepares graduates to ask significant questions, engage relevant knowledge, and wrestle with complex issues. The program is rooted in the classical liberal arts and sciences as understood within the Lutheran educational tradition, and is grounded in an understanding of scientific perspectives, mathematics, languages, and the long-standing traditions of critical discourse about nature, humanity, and the world. The array of academic disciplines has developed as a set of lenses through which we view the world. Through exposure to current procedures, methods, and accumulated knowledge of those disciplines, PLU welcomes students into on-going conversations about nature and the human condition. While immersed in these rigorous conversations, students are challenged to think critically, discern and formulate values, express themselves effectively and creatively, interact with others respectfully, and understand the world from various perspectives. By this means, PLU educates students for courageous lives: lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership, and care—for other people, their communities, and the earth.

F. Encountering Perspectives on Diversity (8): Study of diversity promotes awareness that different cultural perspectives exist within our own society and around the world. This element of the program offers students critical tools for assessing values within a cultural context. Viewing our own values in larger comparative context provides an opportunity for introspection that allows students to question values and arrive at informed commitments.

Alternative Perspectives (A): This element of the program creates an awareness and understanding of diversity in the United States, directly addressing issues such as ethnicity, gender, disability, racism, or poverty.

Cross-cultural Perspectives ©: This element of the program enhances cross-cultural understandings through examination of other cultures.

Students complete four credits from each of the two lines. The A-designated course may concurrently fulfill another GenEd or major/minor requirement. The C-designated course may concurrently fulfill another GenEd or major/minor requirement.

*Helping Students Recognize the Value of the Integrative Learning Objectives*

The Integrative Learning Objectives (ILOs) were adopted by the faculty in November 1999. These objectives offer a unifying framework for understanding how our community defines the general skills or abilities that should be exhibited by students who earn a PLU degree. Therefore, they are integrative in nature. The ILOs are intended to provide a conceptual reference for every department and program to build on and reinforce in their own particular curricula the goals of the General Education Program. The ILOs are meant to serve as a useful framework that unifies education throughout the University, while disciplinary study provides students with the knowledge and understanding of a field that will allow them to function effectively in their chosen area.

The ILOs include: Knowledge Base (A broad knowledge of the basic liberal arts and sciences); Critical Reflection; Expression; Interaction with Others; Valuing; and, Multiple Frameworks.

Many, if not most, faculty at PLU embrace teaching pedagogy that places high value on Expression and Interaction with Others; students often comment that access to gaining skill and ability within these particular ILOs is woven across the fabric of PLU in both curricular and co-curricular experiences. Finding ways to help students articulate these skills and abilities as they gain in sophistication is an important pedagogical goal in our teaching beyond listing them in a syllabus.

Courses meeting the Perspectives on Diversity element requirement, because of their nature and focus, inherently offer students opportunities to gain skill in Critical Reflection, Valuing, and Multiple Frameworks. Again, finding ways to help students articulate these skills and abilities is important.

Ways to uplift the ILOs as they are represented in your course to consider include:

- Align course goals and objectives with ILOs.
- Add an overview statement in your syllabus where it makes sense, such as:  
*The Integrative Learning Objectives (ILOs) help us to understand our definition of the general skills and abilities that should be exhibited by students who earn a PLU degree. The General Education Program provides students with exposure to an array of academic disciplines representing the classical liberal arts and sciences (Knowledge Base). The ILOs challenge students to think critically (Critical Reflection), discern and formulate values (Valuing), express themselves effectively and creatively (Expression), interact with others respectfully (Interaction with Others), and understand the world from various perspectives*

*(Multiple Frameworks). Particularly in this course, you will find our work to be framed by [list particular ILOs].*

### *Integrative Learning Objectives (ILOs)*

#### Knowledge Base

These four statements describe the knowledge base expected of all PLU graduates:

A broad knowledge of the basic liberal arts and sciences.

- An understanding of the interconnections among these basic liberal arts and sciences that provide the broad framework for living with the complexities of life.
- An in-depth knowledge of a specified area of knowledge designated as a major within the university.
- An understanding of the interconnections among the basic liberal arts and sciences and the in-depth knowledge of her/his specified major area.

In addition to the knowledge base described above, and an awareness of how different disciplinary methodologies are used, every student at Pacific Lutheran University is expected to develop the following abilities.

#### Critical Reflection

- Select sources of information using appropriate research methods, including those employing technology, and make use of that information carefully and critically consider issues from multiple perspectives.
- Evaluate assumptions and consequences of different perspectives in assessing possible solutions to problems.
- Understand and explain divergent viewpoints on complex issues, critically assess the support available for each, and defend one's own judgments.

#### Expression

- Communicate clearly and effectively in both oral and written forms.
- Adapt messages to various audiences using appropriate media, convention, or styles.
- Create symbols of meaning in a variety of expressive media, both verbal and nonverbal.

#### Interaction with Others

- Work creatively to identify and clarify issues of concern.
- Acknowledge and respond to conflicting ideas and principles, and identify common interests where possible
- Develop and promote effective strategies and interpersonal relationships for implementing cooperative actions.

#### Valuing

- Articulate and critically assess one's own values, with an awareness of the communities and traditions that have helped to shape them.
- Recognize how others have arrived at values different from one's own, and consider their views charitably and with an appreciation for the context in which they emerged. Develop a habit for caring for oneself, for others, and for the environment.
- Approach moral, spiritual, and intellectual development as a life-long process of making informed choices in one's commitments.
- Approach one's commitments with a high level of personal responsibility and professional accountability.

#### Multiple Frameworks

- Recognize and understand how cultures profoundly shape different assumptions and behaviors.
- Identify issues and problems facing people in every culture (including one's own), seeking constructive strategies for addressing them.
- Cultivate respect for diverse cultures, practices and traditions.