

CCC May Update

The CCC continues its work developing systems for managing our current general education core. In addition to taking ownership of all processes related to GE approvals and equivalencies (which began in January), we have been rethinking our current distributional core in ways that will make it more transparent, coherent, and assessable. In this memo we outline two developments related to management and structure. We offer this memo for the sake of transparency and to encourage feedback from our colleagues.

First, we are developing a **CCC policy guide** to communicate clear and consistent standards and expectations for approving courses for the general education core. The elements of this guide are outlined below. A full draft will be finalized in the fall.

Second, we had intended to proceed with formal discussions about **reorganizing the distributional core around learning outcomes**. However, given the extraordinary circumstances we are all experiencing, it seemed prudent to postpone this discussion for the fall.

However, with a required NWCCU 3rd year accreditation report due in January of 2021 we do not have the luxury of stopping this process entirely. We must report clear and specific progress towards a more clear and assessable general education core program by January 2021. NWCCU will not postpone this requirement. With this deadline in mind, we have been holding informal discussions with departments about revisions to program language with a particular emphasis on element-specific learning outcomes. At present, these discussions are for the purpose of information gathering only. We will proceed with a formal proposal for the reorganization described below in the fall.

As always, please feel free to contact the CCC via your divisional representative or any of our members if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Ron Gerhardstein, Lauri McCloud, Scott Rogers, Claire Todd

A Policy Guide for Managing Core Operations

The CCC wants to ensure that all operations related to the general education core are as transparent and convenient as possible. To this end, we are in the process of designing a policy guide to include the following sections:

- **Integration with current curriculum policies.** We will outline how CCC review intersects with existing EPC standards.
- **Processes for reviewing courses that already carry general education core elements.** We will outline a process for reviewing all courses that currently carry general education core elements, as well as standards for ongoing review post-assessment.
- **Processes for submitting requests for new or revised courses to carry general education core elements.** We will outline transparent processes for requesting that new or revised courses should carry general education elements. We will also provide sample documentation to demonstrate the characteristics of successful proposals. The number of courses approved to carry core element designations will be subject to enrollment needs as articulated by the Provost's Office.

- **Processes for suggesting changes to the overall system or structure of the core.** Faculty will be able to propose changes to the structure of the core. These proposals will be collected on a rolling basis and changes will be considered at the end of each assessment cycle when.
 - **A 5 year assessment cycle.** Each general education core element will be formally assessed no less than every 5 years to assure program coherence and quality. The primary purpose of general education assessment will be to identify strengths and opportunities in our delivery of the core curriculum. Data produced by assessment will highlight opportunities to refine or revise learning outcome and/or change the structure and delivery of the core.
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Reorganizing the Distributional Core around Learning Outcomes

Our general education core is largely focused on a distributional arrangement that prioritizes the individual contributions of departments and divisions. As such, control over each core element is aligned to departments and divisions. The result is a total of more than 191 learning outcomes articulated for the entire core, ranging from 3 to 19 for a given general education element. Additionally, there are 5 Integrated Learning Outcomes, which are written with at least 3 sub-outcomes each. Between the ILOs and the department outcomes, our core program has more than 206 published learning objectives.

Further, students complain that a core arranged around departments and divisions feels like a checklist. Advisers sometimes have trouble articulating how the individual pieces of the program form a coherent whole. That is, because the core is dispersed and inconsistently delivered, we have difficulty explaining the purpose and value of general education. There is no unifying story, which means that students commonly see the core as a hoop to jump through or a hurdle to overcome. And faculty may view the core as an entity largely in service to their major (e.g., for recruitment or for filling seats in courses that are required for a major).

Also pressing, our accreditor has called on us to make substantive change to how we think about program design and assessment. Specifically, they have called for 3 changes:

1. Employ **meaningful and appropriate** measures for indicating the achievement of identified student learning outcomes (Standard 4.A.1)
2. Implement a more **comprehensive and effective** system of documentation of program learning outcomes achievement (Standard 4.A.3)
3. Clarify the **alignment, correlation, and integration** of general education outcomes with the Integrative Learning Outcomes (Standard 4.A.4 and 4.B.2)

The first evaluation of progress will occur in a required 3rd year self-report due in January of 2021.

To add to the coherence (story) and cohesion (assessability) of our current core/model, in fall 2020 the CCC will submit an EPC proposal reorganizing the distribution around learning objectives and reducing the aggregate number of learning goals to a few dozen that may be assessed on a sustainable 5 year assessment cycle. *Importantly, this reimagining of the distributive core does not change any credit total or unit distribution. It simply reorganizes the current elements into a more coherent and assessable system.*

Specifically, we have outlined the following proposed changes. Please note that these changes are under review/discussion with departments and programs. We share this revision now to prompt

conversation and to inform you of our work to date. You can access a complete framework with contextual material and assessable learning outcomes by [clicking this link](#).

<p>Intellectual and Practical Abilities (28 hrs)</p> <p>Inquiry and Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Literature/LT (4) ● Natural Sciences/NS (4) ● Social Science/SO (4) ● Science/Scientific Methods/SM (4) <p>Arts and Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arts/AR (4) <p>Written and Oral Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FYEP 101/WR (4) ● FYEP 190 (double dips) ● Senior Seminar/SR (double dips) <p>Quantitative Literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mathematical Reasoning/MR (4) 	<p>Mission and Values (20 hrs)</p> <p>The Study of Religion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Religion/RC (4) <p>Intercultural Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Religion/RG (4) ● Social Sciences/SO (4) <p>Philosophical Reasoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Philosophy/PH (4) <p>Perspectives on Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alternative Perspectives/A (double dips) ● Cross-Cultural Perspectives/C (double dips) <p>Health and Fitness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PHED 100 (1) and Activity Courses (3)/PE
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This revision of our current general education core model embraces a vision of breadth and multidisciplinary without dismantling the distributional core that is at the heart of our current program. Further, it shifts future conversations about core revision toward the foundational elements of a PLU education, rather than a mere distribution of courses.

Using core learning objectives based on the AAC&U LEAP Initiative as the organizing principle, this vision of general education is more clearly focused on student learning at the same time it is carefully aligned to national standards. It signals a shift away from the distribution as something solely tied to departments and divisions. It presents a narrative of foundational learning that aligns intellectual and practical skills with mission-oriented values and attitudes. It also centralizes assessment by aligning elements to outcomes. We will know with certainty where and how students are developing particular skills and practices during their time at PLU.

We have developed drafts of learning outcomes attached to each distributional element. Our drafts are based on the outcomes published by departments, as well as the AAC&U VALUE rubrics. We will continue to bring these drafts to the departments/divisions that offer them. Feedback from faculty who teach these courses will be essential for balancing our desire for clarity and coherence with a distinctly PLU vision of general education.

We plan to submit an EPC proposal by October 1 following informal conversations in the spring and summer, as well as more formal feedback and revision in the fall.

With a revised structure in place, we may begin assessing our program to ready ourselves for the Year 7 NWCCU review in 2025. Additionally, we will begin reviewing courses for inclusion in the core and pursuing other changes recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on General Education reform based

on faculty feedback and research into best practices in general education. These additional changes will be developed in dialogue with the faculty throughout the 2020-21 academic year.

We anticipate submitting an EPC proposal for more substantive changes related to the size and content of the core in Fall 2021.

We are happy to discuss any of these developments with individuals, departments, and programs.