

Criterion One: Mission

1. Does the General Education Program rationale reflect the General Education Program's current activities and goals?

The General Education Program rationale was stated in the General Education Program document adopted by the Board of Regents in 2005. It reads:

General education is the core of an undergraduate education. It is general in that it provides students with a comprehensive educational experience and prepares them for study within their major. General education teaches students to think critically and communicate effectively; it provides an introduction to the methodologies and practices of the academic disciplines; it promotes intellectual curiosity and a love of learning.

It appears in the university's Undergraduate Catalog with the following sentence added:

General education is the heart of an EMU education and a source of institutional pride.

(see <http://catalog.emich.edu/content.php?catoid=14&navoid=1933>)

We find evidence that the General Education Program's current activities and goals are indeed reflected in the General Education Program rationale. A detailed analysis follows.

General education is the core of an undergraduate education. Every undergraduate degree at Eastern Michigan University requires a student to complete all requirements of the General Education program.

It is general in that it provides students with a comprehensive educational experience and prepares them for study within their major. The program comprises:

- courses in English composition, oral communication and quantitative reasoning;
- a course in US Diversity and a course in Global Awareness;
- 2 courses in each of the 4 areas Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences;
- Learning Beyond the Classroom; and
- a Writing Intensive course in the major.

The breadth of the program provides students with a comprehensive educational experience. The writing, speech and quantitative reasoning required courses reinforce the general communication and quantitative skills that will be needed in almost every major at EMU. The knowledge of the disciplines courses ground students in the intellectual practices and methodologies that underlie most of the majors at EMU.

As evidence, a survey of the majors listed in the Undergraduate Catalog shows that **% of the 166 majors currently listed in the Undergraduate Catalog require at least one course from the General Education Program.

General education teaches students to think critically and communicate effectively; it provides an introduction to the methodologies and practices of the academic disciplines; it promotes intellectual curiosity and a love of learning. Each General Education requirement is defined by a set of outcomes. Here follow some examples of outcomes which address the various parts of this statement.

General education teaches students to think critically...

[Students] will learn to analyze the situation using arithmetic, geometric, algebraic, and probabilistic or statistical methods. (Quantitative Reasoning)

Students will analyze and synthesize information from diverse sources to make informed decisions regarding global issues. (Global Awareness)

General education teaches students to ... communicate effectively

Students will make explicit choices about the form and content of their writing.

(Written Communication)

The Student is able to communicate oral messages intended for public audiences. (Oral Communication)

[Students] will learn to share the findings in oral or written reports using appropriate mathematical language. (Quantitative Reasoning)

[General education] provides an introduction to the methodologies and practices of the academic disciplines

Students will learn how knowledge is developed and disseminated in particular disciplines. (Knowledge of the Disciplines).

[General education] promotes intellectual curiosity and a love of learning

Students will recognize how the humanities cultivate aesthetic appreciation, imagination, and empathic understanding of others. (Humanities)

[Students will] engage in informed discussions about the validity of the conclusions from reports in the media relating to the natural sciences. (Natural sciences)

2. How is the General Education Program rationale aligned with the University mission and strategic plan objectives?

The General Education Program focuses clearly on student learning outcomes, whereas Eastern Michigan University's strategic plan focuses on designing an environment that supports faculty and student inquiry and research within and beyond the university, local and national borders. The General Education Program focuses on insuring that Eastern Michigan University students develop the knowledge, skills, and competence to engage in the world in an ethical and responsible manner, which will enable Eastern Michigan University to be regarded as a premier public university that is recognized for student centered learning and high quality programs and community impact.

Eastern Michigan University's core values—excellence, respect, inclusiveness, responsibility, and integrity—are realized in an integrated manner as students develop proficiencies in (1) effective communication (written composition, oral communication, rhetoric); (2) quantitative reasoning; (3) perspectives of a diverse world (global awareness, U.S. diversity, and understanding of each other); (4) knowledge of the disciplines (the arts, humanities, foreign language, social science, and the natural sciences and (5) learning beyond the classroom. Eastern Michigan University fosters an environment that focuses on giving students the greatest opportunity to engage in purposeful learning and involvement so that they can successfully maximize their education. The ideal environment is one in which students are engaged in purposeful inquiry and research inside and outside the classroom, and receive the academic, social, physical and emotional support services that will enable them to be valued member of the university community and become engaged citizens.

While Eastern Michigan University supports the design and development of academic and research programs, the faculty support students in developing verbal and written fluency, and in developing disciplinary and technological knowledge and skills; and they provide opportunities where students can develop understanding of societal differences by learning and interacting with people from different backgrounds in the classroom, and develop intercultural awareness by exploring global issues. Those proficiencies are at the heart of student-centered learning, according the Association of State Colleges and Universities. The faculty members who teach in the General Education Program focus on insuring that

students have opportunities to personalize their learning and to engage in inquiry and research into complex problems and issues and to develop proficiencies like error detection, integrative knowledge, human unity and diversity, environmental sustainability, tolerance for uncertainty, understanding of each other, social justice, and the ethics of democracy and complexity.

Eastern Michigan University has systems and processes in place that foster innovation, diversity and ethical conduct in the workplace. The allocation of resources, professional development, and the activities on campus are aimed at insuring that students receive an excellent education. The General Education Program was designed to insure that the students are career ready and civic minded.

3. Consider how national criteria for General Education might be appropriate for supporting the program’s educational goals.

Eastern Michigan University’s values are roughly aligned with the AACU Principles. Eastern values excellence and AACU aims for making excellence inclusive. Eastern values respect and AACU aims to engage students in asking big questions, connecting knowledge, choice and action and assessing students ability to solve complex problems. Eastern values accountability and individual and team commitment and the AACU aims to give students a moral compass and to teach the arts of inquiry and innovation. Eastern values inclusiveness and AACU aims to foster civic intercultural, and ethical reasoning and emphasize personal responsibility. Eastern values integrity and transparency and AACU strives to create a campus climate that fosters ethical and academic integrity, to promote civic responsibility and to promote perspective taking and informed decision-making.

The Eastern Michigan University General Education program is somewhat aligned with the principles and essential outcomes of the Liberal Education Academic Programs campaign organized by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. The LEAP Program is a research-based program that has been developed over the time Eastern Michigan University has implemented the General Education Program, so we can learn from the national initiative. The AACU generated principles for learning and three broad categories of learning outcomes that undergraduates develop as they encounter coursework in undergraduate programs: (1) Intellectual and practical skills; (2) Personal and social responsibility; and (3) Integrative and applied learning. In addition, they developed rubrics that programs can use to assess the extent to which learning experiences and tasks enable students to achieve the desired outcomes. These can be found on website: <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index.cfm> . This table summarizes the LEAP categories of learning outcomes.

Intellectual and Practical Skills	Personal and Social Responsibility	Integrative and Applied Learning
Inquiry and analysis	Civic knowledge and engagement, local and global	Integrative and applied learning
Critical thinking		
Written communication	Intercultural knowledge and competence	
Oral communication	Ethical reasoning	
Reading		

Quantitative literacy	Foundations of skills for lifelong learning	
Information literacy	Global learning	
Teamwork		
Problem solving		

Eastern Michigan University’s General Education Program outcomes focus on subject matter content objectives and outcomes, whereas the LEAP program focuses on cross-cutting performance outcomes. Eastern Michigan University’s General Education learning outcomes are organized by specific disciplinary outcomes, as indicated in the chart below.

Communication	Quantitative reasoning	Perspectives of a diverse world	Knowledge of the disciplines	Learning beyond the Classroom
Written Communication	A model for problem solving in quantitative contexts	Global Awareness U. S. Diversity	Arts	Self and Well-Being
Oral Communication			Humanities & Foreign Language	Community Service, Citizenship and Leadership
Writing in the major discipline			Social Sciences	Cultural and Academic Activities and Events
			Natural Sciences	Career and Professional Development
				International and Multicultural Experience
				Undergraduate Research

While the outcomes are stated as the “students will...”, the program outcomes do not address many of the dimensions that are related to personal and civic outcomes as defined by AACU, such as student attitudes.

While each syllabus that is reviewed by the General Education Vetting Subcommittee contains information about how the outcomes will be assessed, there is no mechanism in place for the review committee to evaluate the extent to which the program achieves the desired outcomes. Some of the program outcomes are most likely evaluated using the standards of professional organizations. There are, however, no shared and public program assessment rubrics can be used to evaluate the extent to which the program and courses enable students to achieve those outcomes.

Given Eastern Michigan University’s mission and vision to be a highly respected and nationally-recognized public university, it seems worthwhile examining how other universities are reviewing and presenting their programs. The Stanford review of their general education program (http://web.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/sues/SUES_Report.pdf) focused on requirements for graduation,

sequencing a liberal education, opportunities to learn outside the classroom, institutional support for advising, general education and innovation, and the appendix contained the committee charge, members, stakeholders surveys, comparison of general education courses with peers. Eastern Michigan University has gathered similar data, but the organization is different.

Eastern Michigan University won the Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) Award for an exemplary program in 2007 for fostering students' abilities to integrate and apply what they learn over time, across courses, and between academic, personal, and community life (<http://www.agls.org/exemplaryprogram.htm>). James Madison University won the award in 2009 for communicating with stakeholders about the university (<http://www.jmu.edu/gened>) and Wofford College was the award winner for 2012 for communicating with stakeholders, especially students, about the values (student focused) and resources (<http://www.wofford.edu/>). The Wofford College website utilizes connectionist principles and accessible design elements to focus students on the services that the college provides that support students and the student experience—both practical, beyond the classroom and academic, the Dean's list. The page can be expanded and prospective and continuing students and faculty easily access to relevant information. The 2011 winner was George Mason University. They earned the award by designing an evidence-based general education program (<http://www.agls.org/documents/2011ExProgGeorgeMasonU.pdf>).

A number of other universities have recently revised their programs in light of the shift from program and course outcomes to student learning outcomes. One of the universities that has done this well is the University of Southern California (<http://dornsife.usc.edu/general-education-program>). The website is student focused and student friendly. Pennsylvania State University provided a link on the website to the bulletin (<http://bulletins.psu.edu/undergrad/generaleducation/skills2>) to insure that students and faculty and other stakeholders have access to information that is consistent, coherent, and comprehensive.

One other way that the national comparison is helpful is in addressing the new literacies and the new technologies of the Internet. Eastern Michigan University's General Education Program initially had technology outcomes, but they were never fully incorporated into the program. While most General Education Programs promote the importance of information literacy and academic honesty, they do not address how to help students use technology to achieve personal, professional, or civic purposes. There are a few exceptions. One notable exception was the inclusion of the Information Technology program at the University of South Carolina (<http://www.hrsm.sc.edu/iit/undergraduate/>). In addition, the University of Albany provides an overview of the new requirements for general education. There is information about the review process and information for students and faculty about student planning and transfer course policies. The review resulted in the creation of a category of courses related to "Challenges of the 21st Century" (<http://www.albany.edu/generaleducation/>).

National comparisons can lead to helpful insights about how to make our program, program review, and program assessment practices public. This is the essence of research and evidence based best practice today. We can learn from them. For example, Appalachian State University does a good job publicizing the general education review process (<http://generaleducation.appstate.edu/program-review-process>). They are clear about the integrative methods (<http://generaleducation.appstate.edu/integrative-methods-appalachian>) and resources on campus (<http://generaleducation.appstate.edu/integration-resources-appalachian>) and off campus (<http://generaleducation.appstate.edu/integration-resources-campus>), and provide faculty with tips for multidisciplinary collaboration (<http://generaleducation.appstate.edu/toolbox-integrative-studies>). They also provide an advising toolkit that provides all of the updates on resources that students and advisors need to use in planning, and it includes the agreements between the university and community college(s) regarding equivalencies (<http://generaleducation.appstate.edu/advisors>).

Many universities across the nation are sharing their efforts to plan and implement student-centered, outcome-based, performance oriented General Education Program reforms. Eastern Michigan University can benefit from considering their approach. Several used the National Survey of Student Experiences to identify the rationale for reform and the conditions that promote and hinder the shift from course and subject matter content to student-centered approaches to teaching and learning. The employer and student surveys provided a good rationale for revising programs. The University of Pittsburg produced a 29 page report on their research process and planning that went into the design and implementation of an innovative competency-based model of student centered education, calling attention to the benefits and challenges. Wolf Forest College provided a model of program revision that utilized the AACU outcomes as a springboard for planning. The University of Virginia demonstrated how they analyzed and planned their shift to student-centered learning. The writing center at the University of Pittsburg did research on a one credit writing intensive course that was offered in each of the disciplines, gathering data on planning, implementation and professional development, and including course data, surveys, focus group discussions and interviews with faculty and students.