

Proposal for Redesigned General Education Program

Brigham Young University

I. GENERAL EDUCATION VISION STATEMENT

BYU's general education program is central to the university's mission "to assist individuals in their quest for eternal life" by helping students to acquire skills, gain knowledge, and develop wisdom that enables them better to pursue truth and serve with love.

Like the Saints in the early Church, today's students should commit themselves to the ambitious pursuit of truth through the study of "things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been; things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad," as well as "the wars and the perplexities of the nations," and "languages, tongues and people" (see D&C 88:79; D&C 90:11). In pursuing an education at BYU, students "should enlarge their intellects by developing skills, breadth, and depth" (Aims of a BYU Education). Accordingly, the general education program focuses on teaching "skills in the basic tools of learning" [and] "an understanding of the broad areas of human knowledge" (Aims) to complement the achievement of depth in the major field of study.

Skills. The general education program equips students in this comprehensive pursuit of truth with the ability to think soundly, communicate effectively, and be proficient in quantitative reasoning. These skills help them discern truth and demonstrate intellectual integrity. General education skills courses model analytical thinking, foster clear communication, invite a broad perspective, and focus on vital issues facing local and global communities.

Knowledge. The pursuit of truth through the study of the arts, letters, and sciences invites students to understand holistically through multiple modes of inquiry. The phrase "broad areas of human knowledge," emphasized in the BYU Aims document, encompasses the liberal arts curriculum that is the traditional hallmark of American higher education. As students engage in such studies as art and literature, physical and life sciences, languages and social sciences, they unlock access to new horizons of understanding. Students will learn the methodology of disciplines and to make connections between disciplines, to address real-world problems, and to explore questions of importance. The general education classroom can be a place of inspiring learning, "a place in which students become excited about learning and in which that learning leads to revelation" (President Kevin J. Worthen).

The passion for learning and truth at the core of general education helps to prepare students "in all things" (D&C 88:80) to magnify their lifelong callings as dedicated disciples of Christ and engaged citizens of local and global communities. As students learn "by study, and also by faith" (D&C 109:14), they are invited to use their improved talents, skills, and knowledge to go forth and serve "in a world we wish to improve" (BYU Mission Statement).

II. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

The general education program helps students “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). Faculty members teach students skills and the broad domains of knowledge that help students become truth-seeking citizen-disciples, able to navigate complexity, diversity, and change so they might impact the moral, social, and ecological environments in which they and their families live.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will explore the arts, history, humanities, and natural and social sciences, make connections across them, and use their knowledge to critically examine contemporary and enduring questions.
2. Students will collaborate with others, read critically, and use a variety of technologies to find, analyze, and evaluate information, including data, to solve real-world problems.
3. Students will learn effective, ethical, collaborative, and creative communication skills for diverse audiences using a variety of media and genres.
4. Students will engage with diverse cultures, histories, and contexts; develop respect for different perspectives; and understand global challenges.
5. Students will recognize the contributions made and inequities suffered by historically underrepresented people in the United States and across the world.
6. Students will value civic service and develop the knowledge, skills, and moral compass to be effective local, national, and global citizens.
7. Students will construct effective strategies to thrive intellectually, socially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually at BYU and beyond.

III. PROPOSED MODEL FOR A NEW GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

PROPOSAL FOR BYU GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Winter 2021

GE Skills	GE Explorations	GE Disciplinary Perspectives
	<i>First-Year Seminar**</i>	
<i>Diversity, Equity, & Belonging*</i>		
<i>15.0 - 17.0 Credits</i>	<i>12.0 Credits</i>	<i>9.0 Credits</i>
First-Year Writing <i>3.0 Credits</i>	Creativity & Arts <i>3.0 Credits</i>	Arts & Humanities <i>3.0 Credits</i>
Advanced Writing <i>3.0 Credits</i>	Science & Technology in Society <i>3.0 Credits</i>	Scientific Reasoning <i>3.0 Credits</i>
Quantitative Reasoning <i>3.0 Credits</i>	Remembering the Past & Shaping the Future <i>3.0 Credits</i>	Social Science <i>3.0 Credits</i>
Languages and Cultures <i>6.0-8.0 Credits</i>	Citizenship, Stewardship, & Community <i>3.0 Credits</i>	<p><i>*One GE Skills, Explorations, or Disciplinary course must satisfy the Diversity, Equity, & Belonging requirement.</i></p> <p><i>**One GE Explorations' courses must be fulfilled as a First-Year Seminar.</i></p>



IV. NOTABLE CHANGES IN THE PROPOSED GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Inspired Learning with Faculty. Courses in the proposed program such as the first-year seminar and GE Explorations classes emphasize faculty-student relationships and invite students to come into closer contact with faculty members as well as their specialties and research.

Efficiency and Simplicity. The proposed general education program reduces the total number of credit hours from the current 39-51 credits to 36-38 credits. It avoids rigid sequencing to provide students and academic programs maximum flexibility. It is simple enough for students to chart an intentional path through general education, reducing time to graduation.

Diversity, Equity, and Belonging. Students gain a greater understanding and respect for the diversity of human experience in multiple courses: (1) the first-year seminar, (2) a distributed course designated to teach “Diversity, Equity, and Belonging,” (3) a revised civics course with enhanced emphasis on diversity, and (4) a languages and cultures requirement. This designation replaces, in part, the current Global and Cultural Awareness requirement.

Innovative Interdisciplinary Exploration Courses. At the heart of the new GE proposal are a series of interdisciplinary “Explorations” courses that invite faculty and students to navigate the “messy middle” of questions that confront our societies and cultures and resist simple answers. The model allows for nimble “just-in-time” topics that engage contemporary questions as well as classes designed to address perennial ideas. Along with Disciplinary Perspectives, replaces Arts, Letters, Sciences, and History of Civilization 1-2.

Improved Quantitative Reasoning. A universal requirement in quantitative reasoning analyzes real-world case studies to help students understand and think clearly about mathematical, statistical, and quantitative information, and to effectively communicate quantitative information and associated arguments and conclusions using written, oral, and graphical means. This requirement replaces the current Languages of Learning, Option 1 requirement.

Languages and Cultures. BYU’s undeniable strength in language proficiency and intercultural experience is leveraged with a language requirement to help all students gain a global perspective that adds value to training in their respective majors. This replaces the Languages of Learning, Option 2, and Global and Cultural Awareness requirements.

First-Year Seminar. Embedded in a GE Explorations course, the FYS offers favorable student-faculty ratios, peer mentoring, and learning communities to smooth the transition to college and support first-generation, underrepresented, and academically vulnerable students. The option to combine the FYS with a first-year writing class, a course on citizenship and community, or a religious education course provides a common core.

V. REQUIREMENTS

Skills (15-20)

Students must learn to reason and communicate in a dynamic environment that requires flexible strategies (diverse audiences, various media), critical thinking, collaboration, digital literacy, cross-cultural competency, and reasoning with data.

Writing (6)

As in the current GE program, a *First-Year Writing* course will be an important foundation for students. All students are encouraged to take this course to develop clear thinking and communication. The course will continue to be taught as currently constituted, although some sections of the class will be linked with the first-year seminar. Additionally, all students will be required to take an *Advanced Writing* course during their junior or senior year. Whenever possible, this class should be taught within the student's major.

Quantitative Reasoning (3-6)

The course will focus on developing quantitative reasoning skills in the context of real-world case studies. Students will acquire quantitative, statistical, and software skills through just-in-time pedagogy. Skill instruction will be practical, essential, and focused on the achievement of learning outcomes rather than a complete treatment of mathematical, statistical, and/or software topics. Students entering the university below a certain threshold proficiency may need to take an additional prerequisite course.

Languages and Cultures (6-8)

Students will take a minimum of six credits of language courses on campus at the student's appropriate skill level, regardless of previous experience. International experiential learning in the major and the Culture and Language Across the Curriculum offer additional avenues for fulfilling the requirement.

Disciplinary Perspectives (9)

Every student completes one course in each broadly defined area of human knowledge:

- *Arts & Humanities*
- *Social Science*
- *Scientific Reasoning*

This approach exposes them to ways various disciplines approach knowledge and problems. All students will benefit from exploring these areas of knowledge that GE considers essential to a broad education, including students in non-liberal arts and non-science majors.

GE Explorations (12)

GE Explorations courses transcend disciplinary boundaries, explore vital questions, and address pressing problems. They should teach the art of engaging with the world: to see it clearly, enjoy it fully, criticize it constructively, and effectively change it—the liberal arts in action. Hence, courses are neither surveys nor introductions to majors but concept-driven classes that address enduring questions or delimited challenges. Students participate in the advancement of knowledge as they purposefully and critically think about the content, ask meaningful questions, and posit new hypotheses. Students must take one GE Explorations course from each of the following categories:

- *Creativity and Art* courses investigate the creative process, its diverse products, and the impacts design, art, architecture, engineering, and even nature have on human communities.
- *Remembering the Past and Shaping the Future* courses develop a considered understanding of the past and emphasize how past choices produce the present. Courses appreciate the array of historical contributions to our globalizing civilization and consider how historical understanding informs our work to make a better future.
- *Science and Technology in Society* courses examine relationships between scientific innovation and social change, explore values that inspire the technologies we create, and engage in debate over benefits and hazards of technology.
- *Citizenship, Stewardship and Community* courses contemplate our responsibility as local and global citizens to participate in good government and engage in meaningful causes. Courses analyze specific social, political, or environmental problems and challenge students to help solve them to create a more just and sustainable society. (A revised version of American Heritage would fit in this category.)

GE Designations (no additional credit)

In addition to fulfilling the requirements listed above in this section, students will take a course that bears each of the following designations:

First-Year Seminar.

This is a GE Exploration class designated as a First-Year Seminar and open only to freshmen. This class exists in an envelope with section(s) of first-year writing and a class from Religious Education forming a cohesive student cohort. The first-year seminar, like other GE Explorations classes, will focus on a contemporary or enduring question

through an interdisciplinary lens but will also include instruction to help students transition to life as a BYU student.

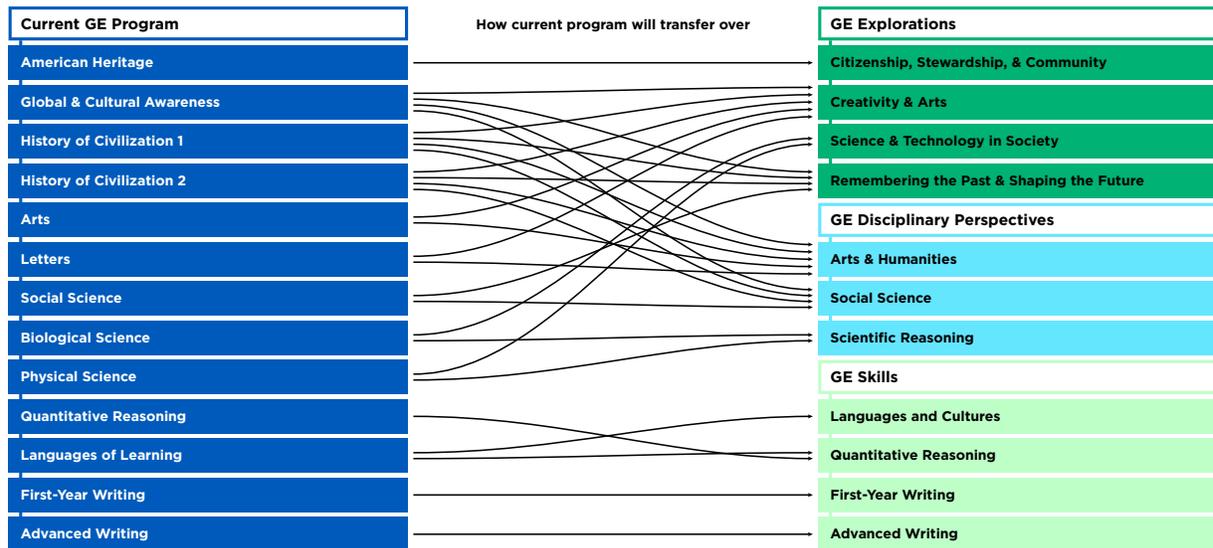
Diversity, Equity, and Belonging

All students will be required to take one course within either the Disciplinary Perspectives, Language (advanced) designation, or the Explorations classes' that carries the "Diversity, Equity, and Belonging" designation. These courses help students recognize the contributions of historically underrepresented groups and racial minorities, critically examine unequal relationships of power within communities, and increase their ability to empathize with those whose life experiences are different than their own.

VI. RESOURCE ALLOCATION

GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHING RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION

Winter 2021



VII. APPENDIX: FACULTY COMMITTEES

General Education Design Committee 1.0 (Spring 2019-Fall 2019)

- Stan Benfell, Chair (Professor, Comparative Arts & Letters)
- Jodi Chowen (Managing Director, Careers & Experiential Learning)
- Mikaela Dufur (Professor, Sociology)
- Eric Huntsman (Professor, Ancient Scripture)
- Brian Jackson (Associate Professor, English)
- Amy P. Jensen (Professor, Theatre and Media Arts, Associate Dean, Fine Arts & Communication)
- Jane Lassetter (Professor, Nursing)
- Kelly Patterson (Professor, Political Science)
- James Patterson (Associate Professor, Chemistry & Biochemistry)
- Steve Peck (Associate Professor, Biology)
- Tyler Pedersen (Associate Director, Student Development Services)
- Cecilia Peek (Associate Professor, Comparative Arts & Letters)
- Brooke Smith (Manager, Curriculum & Class Scheduling)
- Vincent Wilding (Professor of Chemical Engineering, Associate Dean, Engineering)

General Education Design Committee 2.0 (Winter 2020-Fall 2020)

- Susan S. Rugh, Chair (Dean, Undergraduate Education)
- Christopher (Chip) Oscarson, Co-Chair (Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education)
- Leanna Balci (Associate Librarian, Lee Library)
- Jennifer Bown (Associate Professor, German & Russian)
- Michael Brown (Professor, PD Biology)
- Isaac Calvert (Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership & Foundations)
- Douglas Cook (Assistant Professor, Mechanical Engineering)
- Richard Davis (Professor, Political Science)
- Michael Dorff (Professor, Mathematics)
- Matt Greene (Administrator, Bachelor of General Studies, Continuing Education)
- Jeremy Grimshaw (Associate Professor, School of Music, Associate Dean, Fine Arts & Communications)
- Melissa Hawkley (Office of AAVP for Undergraduate Studies)
- Kathryn Isaak (PT Faculty, Comparative Arts & Letters)
- Brian Jackson (Professor, English)
- Wade Jacoby (Professor, Political Science)
- Jerry Johnson (Professor, Biology)
- Byran Korth (Associate Professor, Church History)
- Jeff Larson (Assistant Professor, Marketing & Global Supply Chain)
- Katreena Merrill (Associate Professor, Nursing)
- Shawn Miller (Professor, History)
- David Neilsen (Professor, Physics and Astronomy)

- Larry Nelson (Professor, School of Family Life)
- Rex Nielson (Associate Professor, Spanish & Portuguese)
- Marc Olivier (Professor, French & Italian)
- Jenny Pulsipher (Professor, History)
- Rickelle Richards (Associate Professor, Nutrition, Dietetics & Food Sciences)
- Brooke Smith (Manager, Curriculum & Class Scheduling)
- Vincent Wilding (Professor, Chemical Engineering)

Faculty General Education Committee (Fall 2020-present)

- Christopher Oscarson (Chair, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Education)
- Leanna Balci (Associate Librarian, Lee Library)
- John Barrick (Associate Professor, Accounting)
- Isaac Calvert (Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership & Foundations)
- John Harb (Professor, Chemical Engineering)
- Nicholas Mason (Professor, English)
- Katreena Merrill (Associate Professor, Nursing)
- Riley Nelson (Professor, Biology)
- Jon Ostenson (Associate Professor, English & University Writing)
- Jenny Pulsipher (Professor, History)
- Benjamin Thevenin (Theater & Media Arts)
- Steven Wood (Professor, Chemistry)

Others Serving on Various Subcommittees

- DJ Gonzales (History)
- Lori Spruance (Public Health)
- Greg Thompson (Spanish)
- Ray Clifford (Center for Language Study)
- Jeff Shumway (Latin American Studies)
- Amy Williams (University Writing)
- Steve Moody (Japanese)
- Phil Rash (Assistant Dean, First-Year Experience)
- Bryce Bunting (Counseling & Psychology Services)
- Rob Colson (Comparative Arts & Letters)
- Jaren Hinckley (Music)
- Quinn Mecham (Political Science)
- Ed Gantt (Psychology)
- Jeremy Pope (American Heritage, Political Science)
- Kristin Matthews (English, American Studies)