General Education Council’s Recommendations for Changes in the Diversity Requirement

Approved by GEC 9/30/16, Amended 10/28/16

The General Education Council has conducted a review of the current Diversity Requirement and recommends that:

• A Diversity [DIV] course will be required of all first year students during their first two semesters on campus (Fall or Spring semesters for full-time, first year students)
• This DIV course will be used to satisfy the fourth course requirement in the Social World Curriculum Area (the current requirement is met through an AL, AT, SB, I, or SI course).
• The overall language guiding the learning outcomes and expectations for the diversity requirement is revised to reflect more contemporary and current understandings of diversity and to more specifically address the expectations for courses meeting the three diversity designations (DIV, US Diversity [U], and Global Diversity [G]).

In this document we present each recommendation noting the change to current requirements (Section I), provide a brief context and rationale for these recommendations (Section II), and include a discussion of Frequently Asked Questions that reflect comments GEC has received as part of the review process (Section III).

I. Recommendations

A. Learning Outcomes for the Diversity Requirement

The current language defining the diversity requirement is outlined in Sen. Doc. No. 84-024B (2005):

Social and Cultural Diversity Component

Within the six courses of the Social World requirement, students must take two courses devoted to specific study of diversity in human cultures and societies. It is important that General Education address the complex ways in which societies and cultures differ from one another. Educated individuals should be guided by attitudes which value cultural differences. Their perspectives on and communication with people of different cultures, both within their own society and in other societies, should emanate from an understanding of cultural diversity rather than from applying ethnocentric stereotypes. More specifically, the purposes of the requirement are: (1) to emphasize the need for educated citizens to understand that different cultures and societies provide unique contexts for human experience; (2) to analyze and appreciate the ways in which norms and values differ across cultures and societies; and (3) to encourage pluralistic
Courses satisfying this requirement shall reach beyond the perspectives of mainstream American culture and the Western tradition. They may focus on the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America, or the Middle East; the descendants of those peoples living in North America; other minorities in Western industrial societies; and Native Americans. Since a sensitivity to social and cultural diversity is advanced by an understanding of the dynamics of power in modern societies, courses that focus on the differential life experiences of women outside the mainstream of American culture, minorities outside the mainstream of American culture, and the poor also come within the scope of this requirement.

The current diversity requirement is also guided by a revision to the General Education requirements outlined in Sen.Doc. 01-035 (2001) stipulating that:

Of the two diversity courses that students must complete, one focus on diversity in the United States, and one on diversity outside the United States. We would designate these as “Domestic Diversity” and “Global Diversity” requirement to be in effect for those entering 2002.

GEC recommends that this language be replaced with the following:

**Proposed Learning Outcomes for the Diversity Requirement**

The Diversity Requirement prepares students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to appreciate, understand and interact effectively with people from different cultures and backgrounds and is designed to provide students with the experiences needed to meet the following learning outcomes:

1. **Appreciate, value, and respect diverse social, cultural, and political perspectives.**

2. **Demonstrate an understanding of and critically analyze how the legacies of marginalization, prejudice, and discrimination impact current power relations and the life circumstances of people often marginalized by society because of race, ethnicity, language, religion, class, ability, sexuality, and gender.**

3. **Critically analyze their own perspectives and identities, develop an awareness of implicit biases, and understand how these perspectives and biases have been shaped by power relations within social and institutional contexts.**

4. **Demonstrate an understanding of identity differences and engage in conversations based on those differences.**
5. Explore and construct questions that reflect multiple identity perspectives to develop a more complex understanding of the world.

These learning outcomes will be supported through the DIV Course, required of all entering students, and the U and G courses currently offered as part of the General Education curriculum.

B. Structural changes to accommodate the DIV course

The table below contains an overview of the current General Education requirements with the structural change noted by strike out and gray. The DIV course replaces the fourth course currently required in the Social World Curriculum Area. The addition of a DIV course does not change the number of credits required to fulfill the General Education requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Area</th>
<th># of courses required</th>
<th># of credits earned</th>
<th>Fulfilling the Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2 courses</td>
<td>6 credits</td>
<td>One course (CW) or exemption (see Writing Program) and one upper level 3-credit course in your major department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Mathematics</td>
<td>1 course</td>
<td>0-3 credits</td>
<td>One course (R1) or a passing score on the Tier 1 Math Exemption Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Reasoning</td>
<td>1 course</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
<td>One course (R2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological &amp; Physical World</td>
<td>2 courses</td>
<td>8 credits</td>
<td>One course (BS) and one course (PS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social World</td>
<td>4 courses</td>
<td>16 credits</td>
<td>One course (AL/AT), one course (HS), one course (SB), and one course (AL, AT, SB, I, or SI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>2 courses</td>
<td></td>
<td>One course focusing on UNITED STATES diversity (U, ALU, ATU, HSU, IU, or SBU) and one course focusing on GLOBAL diversity (G, ALG, ATG, HSG, IG, or SBG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative Experience</td>
<td>varies by department</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
<td>A variety of options will be offered during junior or senior year in your major department. (*)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Required in the first year on campus.
C. Guidelines for courses meeting the diversity requirement (DIV, U, and G)

DIV Course

GEC recognizes that the learning objectives associated with the proposed 4-credit DIV course may be addressed through diverse content and disciplines, and encourages course proposals from any academic unit. Given that this course is foundational, it is expected that the content should provide a critical analysis of diversity issues as they relate to students’ lives. Within the DIV course, issues related to diversity and the overall diversity learning outcomes will be at the forefront. The disciplinary content will provide a structure to address diversity-related issues. Regardless of the disciplinary content, DIV courses should utilize pedagogical structures that:

1. Support student discussion and collaboration within small group contexts in order to provide opportunities for students to listen to and learn from each other and voice their concerns and experiences.

2. Provide opportunities to engage in self-reflection with a particular focus on formative experiences, one’s personal history as it relates to social history, and an awareness of one’s relationship to others.

3. Facilitate ongoing engagement with content that reflects diverse perspectives and challenges stereotypes.

4. Develop written and oral communication skills by requiring a minimum of 10 pages of writing, ideally occurring throughout the semester rather than as a final research paper, and structured opportunities for oral presentations and discussions.

The DIV course should provide an in-depth focus on the Diversity learning outcomes. It is expected that this focus will facilitate entering students’ understanding of the contexts for diversity at UMass Amherst and provide them with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to:

- Live, learn, and work within an inclusive community
- Promote and encourage the acceptance of difference
- Be active bystanders
- Diminish the perpetuation of discrimination and oppression

G and U Courses

In addition to the 4-credit DIV course, the proposed diversity guidelines will retain the current structure for the uncredited U and G course requirements. The majority of U and G courses are offered as joint designations (e.g., ALU, HSG, SBU, among others). In these courses, students’ learning is expanded as they address diversity-related issues across different disciplinary areas (e.g., SB, HS, AL, and AT, among others) and
within content that reflects either a focus on the United States or a Global context. This approach allows students to apply their understanding of diversity-related issues to specific cases and content within a disciplinary area. Given the shared formative experience provided by the DIV course, students in the U and G courses are able to explore issues related to diversity more deeply within specific content areas.

Both the G and U courses should:

1. Provoke key General Education skills of communication, critical thinking, and social perspective-taking on issues of social and cultural diversity.

2. Develop written and oral communication skills by requiring a minimum of 10 pages of writing, ideally occurring throughout the semester rather than as a final research paper, and structured opportunities for oral presentations and discussions.

3. Ensure that structures (enrollment capacity, teaching assistants, or technology) are in place to support the feedback, evaluation, and grading of writing assignments and of assignments designed to promote critical thinking.

4. Provide activities and assignments that support critical and analytic thinking in relation to how the legacies of marginalization, prejudice, and discrimination impact current power relations and contexts for questioning the larger society and the individual’s relation to it.

5. Explore the dynamics that shape human experience, produce inequality, and inform social group differences.

Both the U and G courses are expected to support the overall learning outcomes of the diversity requirement and building on the skills and knowledge attained in the DIV course and expand students’ knowledge and skills.

The U and G designations reflect differing contexts and populations of interest:

The **U Diversity** courses focus primarily on the timeframe and geographical locations generally understood to be “United States,” with topics not limited to a single US narrative. Questions of diversity that may be particularly relevant in the “U” focus are those of US women and people living outside gender or heterosexual norms, US groups racialized as peoples of color and/or immigrant or linguistically diverse peoples, Native American and indigenous peoples, and/or peoples who experience disadvantage based on their social/economic class, ability, religion, and/or other social groups or backgrounds marginalized by US-dominant social and cultural norms. Courses that address U are primarily (but not exclusively) focused on diversity within the US.

The **G Diversity** courses focus primarily on global/transnational cultures and populations, and do not limit themselves to a single narrative. Issues of diversity
particularly relevant to the "G" focus are those either derived from experiences of global imperialism and colonialism or related to legacies of marginalization, prejudice, and discrimination within the culture and group identities developed by peoples in non-Western parts of the world. These may include diaspora and migration, religious identity and conflict, cultural diffusion, the role of patriarchy and gender/sexual identity and non-conformity, economic globalization and marginalization, unequal resource allocation, ability, other social groups or backgrounds marginalized on a global basis, and challenges to global sustainability. Courses that address "G" are primarily (but not exclusively) focused on diversity outside a US framework.

Context and Rationale

The General Education Curriculum has maintained a strong commitment to diversity that can be traced back to the original discussions in 1983 outlining a General Education curriculum that would be organized around themes reflecting “Breadth of Knowledge” (1983, Final Report of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Committee on General Education). Within these initial discussions the focus on diversity was distributed across and integrated within the six Breadth of Knowledge themes with the understanding that diversity was an aspect that all General Education courses should address, including courses within the Physical and Biological World as well as those within the Social World. However, the final form of the General Education Curriculum moved towards more of a designation system with diversity formally centered only within the Social World Curriculum Area (Sen. Doc. No. 85-005). In this model, students would meet their Social and Cultural Diversity requirement by taking two courses within the Social World that held a primary designation as Literature (AL), Arts (AT), Historical Studies (HS), or Social and Behavioral Sciences (SB) and an additional designation as Human and Cultural Diversity (now referred to as Social and Cultural Diversity).

As the campus began to adopt this model and move through the approval process to identify courses that met the various Social World designations, the GEC identified significant implementation and student accessibility issues associated with the Human and Cultural Diversity courses. At that time, though a sufficient number of courses were available that met the primary Social World designations, GEC was finding that faculty had challenges in designing courses that also met the diversity requirement (for example, in the review process GEC found that courses met the requirements for Diversity but did not meet the requirements for their primary Social World designation). These challenges led to a limitation in the number of courses available for students that met their diversity requirements. In an effort to address these challenges, GEC recommended and Faculty Senate approved (1989, Sen. Doc. No. 90.015) that in addition to the dual-designation diversity courses, students would also be able to meet their diversity requirement through courses identified as meeting a single or stand-alone “Diversity” designation. This single diversity designation was modified as part of a general review of the General Education Curriculum conducted in 2001 (Sen. Doc. 01-035) with the requirement that students take two courses in
Human and Cultural Diversity changed to one course with a focus on the United States (U) and one course with a focus on the Global context (G).

While there have been changes to the General Education curriculum as a whole, notably the 3-to-4-credit conversion process and the addition of the Integrative Experience requirement, there have been no further structural changes in the diversity requirement. However, there have been continual concerns about the diversity requirement. While the 1989 amendment solved the short-term issue of student access to diversity courses, it did not address the underlying challenge that faculty have had in developing and teaching dual-designation courses. As part of the preparation of the General Education Task Force Report (2009), GEC reviewed data on the implementation of the diversity requirement ("General Education Diversity Courses: Syllabus Analysis prepared by OAPA, 2007), which noted that the course syllabi typically did not indicate that the course met either a U or a G diversity designation and inconsistently included course goals, outcomes, or assignments that aligned with the diversity requirement. GEC has tried to address these issues through the quinquennial review and the new course approval process; however, many challenges have remained, including the lack of specific language guiding the U and G courses and the challenging instructional demands related to our dual-designation system. In addition, students themselves have voiced concerns about how diversity is addressed within the General Education Curriculum and expressed a need for a more in-depth focus on these issues.

In response to these concerns, the General Education Council recommends the diversity requirement be amended to more specifically address the expectations for courses meeting the US and Global diversity requirement, and that the overall language guiding the learning outcomes and expectations for the diversity requirement be revised to reflect more contemporary and current understandings of diversity. The Council values the learning opportunities afforded to students through the dual-designation system and the system whereby students explore issues related to diversity within specific disciplinary contexts. However, the Council also proposes that students be provided with a more focused and in-depth exploration of diversity issues within the context of a formative, credit-bearing, stand-alone diversity course.

This proposed General Education Diversity requirement is consistent with the University’s mission to support students in developing the “knowledge, habits of mind, and tools necessary for a rewarding and productive life,” “to develop their cultural competence,” and does so by “draw[ing] from students’ diverse experiences and perspectives...and challeng[ing] them to demonstrate their inclusiveness and mutual respect” (“What defines a UMass Education” available http://www.umass.edu/chancellor/strategic-planning/phase-ii-planning).

In reviewing the current requirement and in responding to the concerns voiced by multiple constituencies on campus, the General Education Council proposes that the Diversity requirement be amended to include an additional 4-credit course
requirement taken by students in their first year on campus (referred to as the "Diversity [DIV] Course"). The purpose of this course is to serve as a formative experience shared by all students that would allow them to develop an understanding of their own diverse experiences and perspectives, as well as the perspectives of others, and would provide students with a framework to apply this understanding within different disciplinary contexts.

Currently students meet their General Education requirements, in part, by taking 16 credits within Social World (4 credits in AL/AT, 4 credits in HS, 4 credits in SB, and an additional 4 credits in either AL, AT, SB, I, or SI). GEC proposes that the Social World requirements be revised to include 4 credits in AL/AT, 4 credits in HS, 4 credits in SB, and 4 credits in Diversity (i.e., the DIV Course). The 4-credit DIV requirement would replace the current fourth (or "wildcard") course in Social World and so would not lead to an increase in the number of credits students would be required to take to meet their General Education requirements. The Council views this as offering a benefit to students; however, we also recognize that, as an unintended consequence Interdisciplinary (I) and Science Interdisciplinary (SI) courses would no longer meet the fourth course required within the Social World area. Several I and SI courses hold dual designations (e.g., IU or IG) and would continue to be an option for meeting the Diversity U or G requirement. Departments that offer courses with a single I or SI designation may wish to consider converting these courses to a different Social World designation. Students are still required to take two courses in Social and Cultural Diversity, one that focuses on issues related to the United States, and a second that focuses on issues related to a Global context. While a small number of courses exist that hold only a U or G designation, students typically fulfill this requirement by taking a 4-credit course that holds a joint designation (e.g., HSG or ALU). The current G and U course requirements would remain in effect.

[Section III, Frequently Asked Questions, begins on the next page]
III. Frequently Asked Questions

GEC has received comments and feedback from the Faculty Senate Councils that have reviewed the GEC Diversity Recommendations (approved by GEC on 9/30/16) as well as additional comments and concerns raised by various academic units and individual faculty members. The 9/30/16 Diversity Recommendations have been revised to reflect this feedback and the following section, “Frequently Asked Questions [FAQs]” is included to clarify the changes that have been made and to address some of the questions that arose.

Status of the GEC Diversity Recommendations

1. In what ways does the current set of GEC Diversity Recommendations differ from what was approved by GEC on 9/30/16 and distributed for Council Review?

   The language defining the expectations for courses meeting the Global Diversity requirement was changed in response to concerns that the earlier version was too prescriptive and emphasized a Western view of Global Diversity (see p. 6). This was the only substantive change. The other changes reflect an editorial reorganization of the material and the addition of this FAQ section.

2. What process of review and faculty input has been used in the development of the GEC Diversity Recommendations?

   GEC established a subcommittee (faculty and student representation) in spring 2016. GEC discussed the initial recommendations of this subcommittee in May 2016 and the subcommittee continued its work over the summer. GEC formally approved the Diversity Recommendations at the 9/30/16 meeting. These recommendations were then sent to various Faculty Senate Councils for review and comment and made available to individual faculty or units upon request. As comments were received GEC worked to revise the initial recommendations. The recommendations will be discussed as a Committee of the Whole Faculty Senate Meeting on November 10th, GEC will then again revise the recommendations as needed and prepare the formal motion for a vote by Faculty Senate at the December 15th meeting.

Instructional support

1. Do faculty have the needed expertise to develop and teach the new required DIV course?

   Many faculty across various departments are committed to diversity as part of their scholarly interests and in their teaching; several already formally teach diversity related courses through the U and G designations. It is hoped that some faculty, with
approval from their departments, may convert their existing U or G courses into a DIV course. Other faculty may opt to develop a new DIV course. GEC recognizes the need to provide faculty with the support needed to propose and teach these new DIV courses. Discussions are ongoing with TEFD and they will provide assistance to faculty of varying intensity. In spring TEFD will continue to offer their Diversity workshop series adapted to the needs of instructors who intend to teach DIV courses in the 2017 – 2018 academic year. Additionally they will host a full day workshop in early spring as well as ongoing Brown Bag sessions in the Fall. TEFD will additionally provide support for the pedagogical practices associated with the diversity courses through their ongoing face to face offerings and through the development of online materials.

2. Will there be a need to hire additional faculty to teach the new DIV course?

Currently, and in the proposed structure, there continue to be four courses required within the Social World Curriculum Area. The DIV course will not lead to an increased need for faculty. Faculty are currently teaching diversity courses, either formally recognized as G and U, or based on their scholarly interests, course content, and/or departmental needs. TEFD is also available to support faculty in teaching these courses.

Impact on Interdisciplinary Studies

1. How will the new Diversity course requirement impact the status of “I” Interdisciplinary and “SI” Science Interdisciplinary courses?

Interdisciplinary courses are those that involve two or more of the primary designations with at least one of those disciplines drawn from the Social World curriculum area. For example, a course may integrate historical studies (HS) and literature (AL), I, or a course may integrate one of the physical sciences and social sciences, I or SI. Under the current General Education guidelines students are not required to take either an I or an SI course to fulfill their General Education requirements.

Students are required to take 16 credits (4 courses) in the Social World area: one course in Historical Studies (HS), one course in Social and Behavioral Sciences (SB), one course in Art or Literature (AL/AT), and a fourth course in AL, AT, SB, SI or I. Under the GEC Diversity Recommendations the fourth course in Social World would be satisfied only through taking the 4 credit Diversity course. I and SI will remain as a class attribute for existing courses however the I and SI would no longer serve as an alternate for the 4th course required within the Social World Area.
While GEC, and the campus as a whole, value interdisciplinary studies the General Education Curriculum since its inception has been organized within a designation model. Within this designation model core requirements are satisfied through taking courses within specific areas (Writing, Analytic Reasoning, Biological and Physical World, Social World, and Social & Cultural Diversity). Neither I nor SI have been a required part of the General Education Curriculum. Under this proposal the requirements for the Social World will only be satisfied by taking a course holding a primary Social World designation (AL/AT, HS, SB and DIV) and there is no longer an “open” or “wildcard” course for which an I or an SI can substitute.

2. Are their options for courses holding an I or SI designation to retain their status as a General Education requirement?

There are several options for courses that currently hold an I or an SI designation that depend on the nature of the course content for a specific course as well as the function the course plays within the overall departmental offerings. Options include:

- Redesigning and converting the course to meet the expectations for a primary designation (e.g. either within the Social World (AL/AT, HS, SB) or within the Physical or Biological World (PS or BS). These courses could retain the I or SI as a class attribute.
- Redesigning and converting the course to a DIV course
- Redesigning the course as a G or U course. These courses could retain the I or SI as a class attribute.

Transfer Students

1. What will be the impact of the DIV course on transfer students?

The issues with transfer students are complex because students may transfer in with variable numbers of credits and under different articulation pathways. Discussions with transfer Admissions are ongoing to ensure that transfer students will not be negatively affected by these changes.

Implementation

1. When will these new requirements be effective?

The Faculty Senate will utilize an expedited approval process similar to that used for the Integrative Experience courses. It is expected that the DIV courses will include current U/G courses that convert to DIV as well as newly designed DIV courses. In addition the Provost’s Office will provide assistance with implementation including coordination with
Departments, Schools and Colleges on course scheduling and support for faculty including incentives to convert existing U and G courses to DIV and to develop new DIV offerings.