

General Education Taskforce: Phase 1 Recommendations

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

UNC Charlotte launched into a general education (Gen Ed) revision in fall 2020 with the formation of a General Education Parameters Working Group to review best Gen Ed practices at peer institutions and hear from the faculty. The Parameters group concluded that a purposeful, impactful Gen Ed curriculum must:¹

- Provide students with opportunities to develop transferable skills and competencies;
- Prepare students as educated citizens by engaging them in sustained inquiry into complex questions;
- Provide students with opportunities to explore different disciplines and ways of knowing; and
- Intersect with the curriculum in the major to make students’ educational experience a more coherent whole

Those imperatives formed the basis for the charge given to the General Education Task Force that began meeting in January 2021. The task force was asked to undertake its work in two phases with Fall 2023 as the target implementation date. In phase 1 the group developed the broad framework for the new curriculum, it is now seeking feedback on these recommendations. In phase 2, just getting underway, the Task Force it will coordinate groups of faculty stakeholders to resolve outstanding questions and develop a detailed curriculum.

OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE PROPOSED GEN ED CURRICULUM

The new curriculum will be built around nine courses that provide broad distributional foundations (left column) as well as deep inquiry into essential themes of the modern world (right column).

<u>Foundations/Distribution Requirements</u> - 4 courses 1. First-Year Writing (3 or 4) 2. Quantitative/Data Analysis (3) 3. Natural Sciences with lab (4) 4. An additional course in either 2 or 3 (no lab if NS)	<u>Fundamental Themes</u> (4 courses) -- Inquiry into... 5. Global Intersections and Engagement #1 (3) 6. Global Intersections and Engagement #2 (3) 7. Equity, Community, and Identity #1 (3) 8. Equity, Community, and Identity #2 (3)
9. Critical Thinking and Communication (the existing LBST 2301 – possibly theme aligned)	

Four competencies – communication, critical thinking, quantitative and data analysis, and intercultural – will be integrated into these 9 courses, and these competencies will be the basis of our student learning outcomes and assessments. Every Gen Ed course will address some (but not all!) of the four competencies.

Finally, majors will be expected to enhance (and maybe in some cases slightly revise) their curriculum to ensure students have opportunities to further develop these four competencies in the upper division and, as possible, provide students with opportunities to further explore the themes.

WHAT IS CHANGING?

- The new foundations/distribution requirements map closely to current Gen Ed requirements for first year writing, math, and natural science **except** that the proposed curriculum requires one quantitative/data course and one natural science and then a choice of one additional course in these two areas.
- The themes requirement significantly restructures the current social science and LBST curriculum to make it more coherent and impactful.
- All Gen Ed courses will use departmental prefixes. The LBST prefix will be retired (after grandfathering).
- The current LBST 2301 – also offered under a departmental prefix -- will be maintained as part of the scaffolded development of critical thinking and communication competencies

WHAT ARE COMPETENCIES?

¹ American Association of Colleges and Universities’ [“Essential Learning Outcomes.”](#)

The Gen Ed task force is recommending four foundational competencies for Gen Ed. The Gen Ed curriculum will scaffold learning opportunities so students can develop these competencies over time, re-engaging and deepening their mastery as their education matures.

1. **Critical Thinking:** the ability to engage with a problem or question, and using a process of inquiry based in evidence, come to defensible, reasoned conclusions.
2. **Communication:** the ability to frame and express ideas in written and oral discourse and appropriate supporting graphical materials.
3. **Quantitative/Data Analysis:** the ability to effectively analyze, manipulate, and interpret quantitative information and data; includes but is not limited to mathematics.
4. **Intercultural:** the ability to effectively navigate interactions with individuals from different backgrounds, an ability that is rooted in an understanding of how people, oneself included, are shaped by their culture and experiences.

WHAT ARE THEMES?

A core element of the new Gen Ed will be courses that offer sustained, informed inquiry into (and therefore engagement with) two overarching themes.

1. “Global Interconnections and Engagement” courses will focus on the complex issues associated with our individual and collective place in an interconnected global world.
2. “Equity, Culture, and Identity” will focus at a more local level on the complex issues associated with justice, equity, identity, and culture in our society.

To ensure students are exposed to different disciplinary perspectives, they will be limited in the number of themes courses they can take within a single department. For example, it may be decided that no more than one themes course can be taken within a given department. Departments will also be able to determine if the themes courses offered under their departmental prefix can count towards their major. Different themes courses will focus on and assess different sets of competencies.

WHAT’S NEXT

Formation of 5 Satellite Working Groups enlisting faculty with a broad range of expertise and perspectives to join members of the Task Force in turning these recommendations into a curriculum. Issues to be addressed include

- Mapping the proposed curriculum to requirements in all of the majors to identify and resolve any sequencing or requirements challenges
- Detailed curriculum development, including SLOs and assessment, for each of the competencies and the themes courses
- Alignment of competencies and themes given realities of teaching faculty’s interests and abilities
- Appropriate faculty development structures to create and then maintain coherence
- Developing pedagogical and classroom guidelines that will provide structures to help faculty ensure that students develop these core competencies
- Articulation of prior credit for both transfers and FTIC students who earned credit during high school
- Developing mechanisms to ensure that we can adequately forecast and provide sufficient seat capacity

Satellite Working Groups will be formed for

- Critical Thinking and Communications Competency
- Quantitative / Data Competency (also charged with developing the 2023 QEP)
- Intercultural Competency
- Global Intersections and Engagement Theme
- Equity, Culture, and Identity Theme

Let David Johnson -- dajohns1@uncc.edu – know if you’re interested in participating

Figure 1: **Gen Ed Competencies and Scaffolding**

This schematic outlines one possible alignment of the Gen Ed curriculum vis a vis the competencies showing how competencies are developed and reinforced in the curriculum. The competency mapping to courses will be finalized by the satellite working groups.

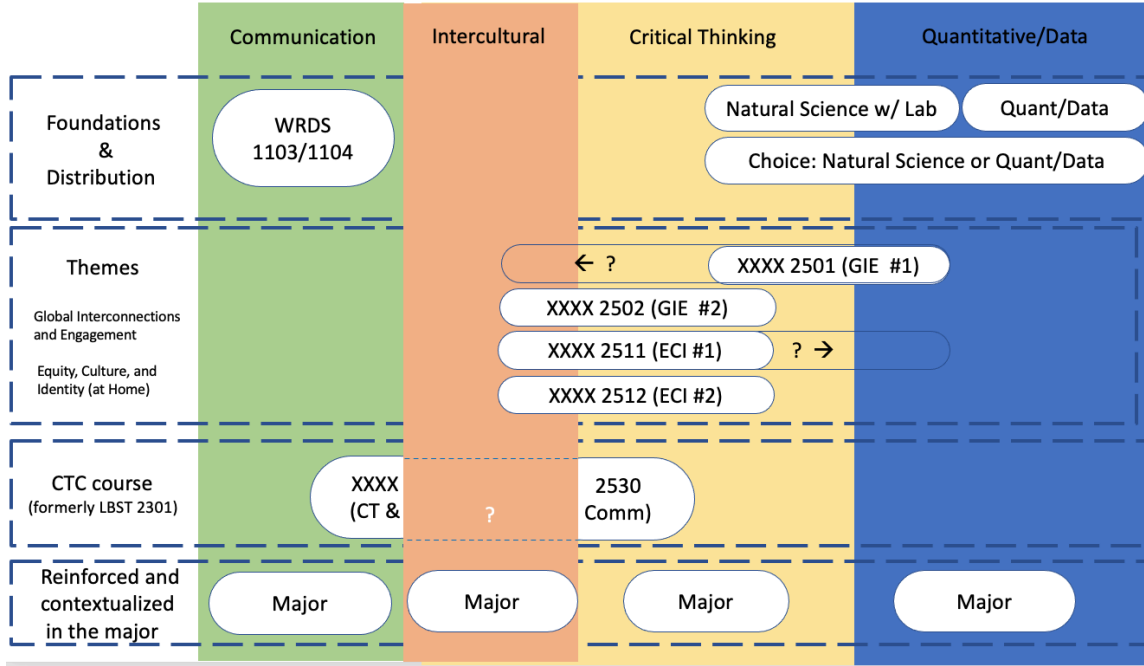


Figure 2: **Crosswalk of current Gen Ed to the Recommended Framework**

This schematic shows how curriculum elements, and instructional assignments will map between the current 10-course curriculum and recommended 9-course Gen Ed. Only lower-level courses shown.

2017 to 2023 General Education Crosswalk Matrix

2017	2023	Comment
1. WRDS 1103/04	1. WRDS 1103/04	
2. Math	2. QCD/Math	
3. Math	3. 2nd Science or 2nd QCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many majors include additional MATH/STAT and/or Science requirements For majors w/o MATH/STAT requirement the QCD competency is picked up in themes
4. Science (no lab)	4. Science w/ lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courses that primarily serve gen ed enrollees (and as gateways for 'discovery' majors) include an emphasis on applied scientific literacy
5. Science w/ lab	4. Science w/ lab	
6. Social Science (selected*)	5. Themes course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two courses are required for each of two themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Interconnections & Engagement: XXXX 2501 & XXXX 2502 Equity, Culture, & Identity @ Home (CLT, NC, USA): XXXX 2511 & XXXX 2512 Disciplinary prefix allows theme courses to serve as 'discovery' gateway and to count towards the major.
7. LBST 110X	6. Themes courses	
8. & 9. LBST 2101, 2102, 221X (TWO Courses required)	7. Themes course 8. Themes course	
10. LBST 2301	9. XXXX 2530	
* Including: ANTH 1101, ECON 1101, GEOG 1105, POLS 1110, SOCY 1101 (SOWK 1101?), INTL 1101 Excluding: ECON 2101 and ECON 2102 Maybe?: AFRS 1110, CJUS 1100, GEOG 1110, POLS 1130/50		