

**State University of New York**  
***Policy and Guidance: State University General Education Requirement***

**I. Relevant Board Policies**

Relevant Board policies are contained in:

- Trustees Resolution 2010-006, *Amendments to General Education Requirement*;
  - Trustees Resolution 2009-138, *Reaffirmation and Strengthening of the State University Board of Trustee Policy on Student Mobility (Transfer and Articulation)*; and
  - Trustees Resolution 2010-039, *Streamlining the State University Board of Trustees Policy on Assessment*.
- A. Trustees Resolution 2010-006, adopted on January 19, 2010, subsumes and revises all previous Board policies on the State University of New York General Education Requirement (SUNY-GER) and takes effect beginning in fall 2010.

Salient Provisions

- i. Thirty credits of general education or the equivalent are required for a State University of New York (SUNY) baccalaureate degree.
- ii. Faculty shall establish the specific course requirements and content of one or more general education curricula reflective of the best practices in American higher education. Such curricula shall include broad, high-quality courses that provide students with a set of non-specialized, coherent and focused educational experiences aimed at enabling students to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies that are useful and important for all educated persons regardless of their jobs or professions.
- iii. Each general education curriculum shall be academically rigorous and comprehensive and shall complement and build on students' academic preparation.
- iv. Graduates with a baccalaureate degree shall demonstrate knowledge and skills in at least seven of ten<sup>1</sup> SUNY-GER knowledge and skills areas:
  - a. Basic Communication (required);
  - b. Mathematics (required); and
  - c. at least five of the following eight areas: Natural Science, Social Science, American History, Western Civilization, Other World Civilizations, Humanities, the Arts and Foreign Languages.
- v. Graduates with a baccalaureate degree shall also demonstrate competency in two additional areas:

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<sup>1</sup> Previous policy required students to demonstrate knowledge and skills in ten of ten SUNY-GER areas. See *Memorandum to Presidents* (Vol. 3, No. 5).

- a. Critical Thinking; and
  - b. Information Management.
- vi. Consistent with the July 22, 2003, *Memorandum to Presidents* (Vol. 03, No. 5), the ten knowledge and skills areas as well as the two competency areas are defined in terms of the student learning outcomes contained in the *Guidelines for the Approval of State University General Education Requirement Courses*, available at <http://www.suny.edu/provost/generaleducation/course-guidelines-v2.pdf>
  - vii. Campuses offering programs leading to Associate in Arts (AA) or Associate in Science (AS) degrees shall design their general education requirements for these programs to facilitate transfer.
  - viii. The Provost shall oversee implementation, including a process for approving appropriate exceptions for “Specialized Colleges, Colleges of Technology, programs awarding two-year vocational degrees, and for other special circumstances.”
- B. Trustees Resolution 2009-138, adopted on November 17, 2009, subsumes and extends all previous Board policies on student mobility and transfer, and takes effect in fall 2010.

Salient Provisions for Student Mobility Related to the SUNY General Education Requirement

- i. Students transferring within the State University of New York shall be treated by their receiving campus in the same way as native students for all academic purposes. [N.B. This provision is a general statement of policy that should be implemented as indicated in Section II, Implementation Policies and Procedures.]
  - ii. Students transferring within the University shall receive full credit towards the SUNY-GER for successfully completed SUNY-GER courses and SUNY-GER waivers or equivalencies granted at other University campuses. This applies to students transferring with or without a SUNY AA or AS degree.
- C. Trustees Resolution 2010-039, adopted on March 23, 2010, replaces all previous Board policies on assessment, and takes effect in fall 2010.
- i. A campus shall promote academic excellence by developing and implementing plans for the regular assessment and review of general education, such that the campus meets or exceeds the assessment standards set by State regulations and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and, as appropriate, programmatic accreditation bodies.

- ii. A campus's regular review of general education shall include the assessment of student learning in terms of the student learning outcomes of the SUNY-GER.

## II. Implementation Policies and Procedures

- A. General education curriculum. A campus shall have one or more general education curricula consistent with University policy. Each such curriculum shall enable graduates of baccalaureate degree programs to meet the SUNY-GER student learning outcomes for Basic Communication, Mathematics, at least five of the other eight SUNY-GER knowledge and skills areas, and the two SUNY-GER competency areas. A campus may also have local general education requirements.
  - i. SUNY-GER courses. A campus shall have a faculty review process for adding, deleting or revising SUNY-GER courses and updating the System-level list of such courses. Each such course shall be aligned with the SUNY-GER student learning outcomes for its SUNY-GER area. [N.B. Previously approved SUNY-GER course assigned fewer than three credits should be re-submitted to the University Provost using the standard course proposal form referenced in Section III.]
  - ii. Syllabi for SUNY-GER courses. In keeping with good practice and the expectations of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, campuses are encouraged to include applicable SUNY-GER student learning outcomes on SUNY-GER course syllabi.
  - iii. Advanced or upper-division courses. A campus may include advanced or upper-division courses in a general education curriculum. In addition, if an advanced or upper-division course has a prerequisite that is a SUNY-GER course, students may use the advanced course to meet the SUNY-GER, regardless of whether that course has been identified as a SUNY-GER course.
  - iv. Student Waivers or Equivalencies. Where appropriate, in accordance with local academic policies, a campus shall afford students an opportunity to obtain a waiver or equivalency for a SUNY-GER area by demonstrating college-level proficiency in the student learning outcomes for that area. When such a proficiency equivalent is approved for a student and credit is not actually awarded, the 30 credit overall requirement is reduced by three credits. Waivers may also be granted as a reasonable accommodation for a learning or other disability.
  - v. Program Waivers. A campus may seek a waiver of a SUNY-GER knowledge and skills area for a specific academic program when the program's curriculum is governed by external standards, such as, but not limited to,

specialized accreditation, and the entire SUNY-GER would delay students' degree completion. However, the required areas of Basic Communication and Mathematics may not be waived. The flexibility in the updated SUNY-GER reduces, and may even eliminate, the need for waivers.

- vi. Information for students. A campus shall provide information about its general education requirements using its catalog, website and other locations. The information should be clear, accurate, complete, current and easy to find. It shall inform prospective and enrolled students about specific campus and programmatic general education requirements (e.g., specific general education requirements in teacher education programs). [N.B. The updated SUNY-GER takes effect for first-year students entering in fall 2010, but campuses may apply it to continuing and returning students as well, and may give these students the choice of using the original or updated SUNY-GER.]
  - vii. Assessment of the general education curriculum. A campus shall have a process that meets the standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education for assessing whether students achieve the SUNY-GER student learning outcomes in its general education curriculum, and for using assessment results to inform planning and resource allocation decisions, and to improve student learning.
- B. AA and AS Programs. Campuses with associate degree programs should include at least seven of ten SUNY-GER knowledge and skills areas in AA and AS degree programs and, whenever practical, a total of 30 credits of SUNY-GER. Basic Communication and Mathematics should be two of the seven areas.
- C. AAS Programs. While many Associate in Applied Science (AAS) programs incorporate seven SUNY-GER knowledge and skills areas, Board policy does not address AAS programs. Wherever feasible, an AAS program should incorporate seven SUNY-GER knowledge and skills areas, including Basic Communication and Mathematics, especially if the program tends to transfer significant numbers of graduates to SUNY baccalaureate programs.
- D. Student Mobility and Transfer. One of the goals of the SUNY-GER is to support seamless student mobility and transfer within the University.
- i. Junior status for transfer students. As stated in Board policy adopted in 1990, and reaffirmed in Trustees Resolution 2009-138, transfer students with AA or AS degrees from SUNY campuses, when accepted in parallel programs at baccalaureate campuses of the University, shall be accorded full junior status and be given the opportunity to complete the requirements for a baccalaureate degree within the same period of time as native students. These transfer students shall not be required to duplicate SUNY-GER areas that they met at prior campuses.

- ii. Transfer of the entire SUNY-GER. If a transfer student has successfully met the entire SUNY-GER, a receiving campus is expected to accept this as having satisfied its SUNY-GER. This does not preclude campuses from implementing local general education requirements, local grade requirements for degree credit, or from applying all relevant local and programmatic requirements to transfer students.
- iii. Transfer of SUNY-GER courses and waivers. Any SUNY-GER area that has been met – whether through a course, a waiver or equivalency, including instructional modalities such as infusion across the curriculum – shall be accepted for SUNY-GER transfer purposes at every SUNY campus. This does not preclude campuses from implementing local general education requirements, local grade requirements for degree credit or from applying all relevant local and programmatic requirements to transfer students. Satisfactory completion for granting of course credit is defined as a grade of C or better. However, if a sending campus’s local policy is to accept a C- or D grade to complete a SUNY-GER requirement, the requirement is deemed to be completed even if the course and its grade are not accepted at a receiving campus.
- iv. General Education Transcript Addendum. A sending campus shall provide a General Education Transcript Addendum (GETA) for each transferring student, and the receiving campus shall accept the sending campus’ GETA certification of completed SUNY-GER areas.
- v. Baccalaureate programs: facilitating transfer from AA and AS programs. Baccalaureate campuses shall enable students with AA and AS degrees from SUNY campuses to obtain a baccalaureate degree in a period of time comparable to upper-division students who are not transfers. These campuses may use multiple approaches, including:
  - a. incorporating SUNY-GER courses into the upper-division requirements of transfers’ baccalaureate programs;
  - b. developing upper-division general education courses or modules; and
  - c. establishing regional arrangements with feeder campuses.

When a baccalaureate program has a local general education requirement that exceeds the SUNY-GER, or when a baccalaureate campus has distinctive lower-division courses in SUNY-GER areas that have become a hallmark of its undergraduate programs, the following principles apply.

- If a transfer student has completed 30-credits and the entire SUNY-GER elsewhere, a receiving campus should exempt the student from local or hallmark general education requirements that are not externally required (e.g., programs leading to teacher certification).

- If a transfer student has not completed 30 credits and the entire SUNY-GER, the receiving campus has the option of waiving one or more SUNY-GER categories to permit the student to complete local or hallmark courses, provided that these courses are significantly different from courses the student has already completed.
  - Campuses and baccalaureate programs that have been exempting transfer students with an A.A. or A.S. degree who have met the entire SUNY-GER from local or hallmark requirements are encouraged to continue to do so.
- vi. AA and AS programs: facilitating transfer to baccalaureate programs. Transfer is one of the goals of AA and AS programs. Therefore, it is important for these programs to enable their graduates to fulfill the SUNY-GER and ensure that their students receive appropriate information and advisement about the 30-credit SUNY-GER needed to complete a baccalaureate degree. Special information and advisement may be needed for baccalaureate degree programs with their own general education requirements (e.g., teacher education programs).
- a. To support student mobility, programs leading to AA and AS degrees are encouraged to include SUNY-GER courses that cover seven SUNY-GER knowledge and skills areas, including Basic Communication and Mathematics, as an integral part of their degree requirements.
  - b. To further support student mobility, campuses with AA and AS programs are encouraged to enable their graduates to fulfill the entire 30-credit SUNY-GER by using such approaches as:
    - incorporating the 30-credit SUNY-GER into AA and AS degree programs' requirements;
    - developing special advisement tracks for students planning to transfer within SUNY;
    - developing certificate programs in general education that would demonstrate certificate holders' fulfillment of the SUNY-GER; and
    - using the SUNY Learning Network (SLN), where SUNY-GER courses are identified in promotional materials and online at <http://www.sln.suny.edu>.
- vii. AAS programs: facilitating transfer to baccalaureate programs. Associate degree-granting campuses are encouraged to incorporate seven SUNY-GER knowledge and skills areas into their AAS programs, especially in programs that tend to transfer significant numbers of graduates to SUNY baccalaureate programs.

### **III. Resources for Campuses**

Trustees Resolution 2009-138, *Reaffirmation and Strengthening of the State University Board of Trustee Policy on Student Mobility (Transfer and Articulation)*, November 17, 2009

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/transfer/BOTpolicies.cfm>

Trustees Resolution 2010-006, *Amendments to General Education Requirement*, January 19, 2010

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/generaleducation/campusgenedresources.cfm>

Trustees Resolution 2010-039, *Streamlining the State University Board of Trustees Policy on Assessment*, March 23, 2010

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/Assessmentinit.cfm?navLevel=5>

State University of New York *Guidelines for the Approval of State University General Education Requirement Courses*

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/generaleducation/course-guidelines-v2.pdf>

Forms for adding, deleting or revising SUNY-GER courses

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/generaleducation/GenEdSubmissionForms.cfm>.

Lists of approved SUNY-GER courses, by campus

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/generaleducation/CourseList/mastercampuslist.cfm>

SUNY-GER program waiver request form

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/generaleducation/GenEdSubmissionForms.cfm>.

*Memorandum to Presidents* (Vol. 3 No.1), January 2, 2003

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/MTP/mtp03-1.pdf>

*Memorandum to Presidents* (Vol. 3 No. 5), July 22, 2003

<http://www.suny.edu/provost/MTP/mtp03-5.pdf>

Middle States Commission on Higher Education's *Characteristics of Excellence*

[http://www.msche.org/publications\\_view.asp?idPublicationType=1&txtPublicationType=Standards+for+Accreditation+and+Requirements+of+Affiliation](http://www.msche.org/publications_view.asp?idPublicationType=1&txtPublicationType=Standards+for+Accreditation+and+Requirements+of+Affiliation)