

Policy on GEAR Program Features and Course Certification Requirements

Note for review:

- Thank you to people across campus that have provided critical feedback to help this policy improve!
- This policy brings multiple GEAR facets together under one policy. Many aspects are consistent with existing policies and practices on campus. To help the review and feedback process: aspects that are highlighted represent either more-than-minor changes from current practices and/or are particularly salient aspects that are consistent with current practices but not clearly codified in existing policies.
- In reviewing, please keep in mind that there are highly differing perspectives on some of the issues that are addressed. These perspectives have been relayed in various venues over many years and also on the recent campus GEAR surveys, the latter of which included a representative sample of stakeholders. This policy aims to speak to the general consensus and as much as possible addresses issues raised in feedback to date.
- There are some additions that address topics in which we currently do not have (but greatly need) guidelines so that we can be consistent. Some sections were written in a fairly open manner / middle ground (rather than with strict guidelines) as a place to start.
- Please keep in mind that this policy is amendable after it is approved, and the resolution includes a commitment to revisiting it in AY 28/29.
- Please send feedback to the GEAR chair, marissa.ramsier@humboldt.edu.

CAL POLY HUMBOLDT
University Senate

Resolution on Policy on GEAR Program Features and Course Certification Requirements

22-23/24-ICC – April 9, 2024 – First Reading

RESOLVED: That the University Senate of Cal Poly Humboldt recommends to the president that the attached Policy on GEAR Program Features and Course Certification Requirements be approved; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the policy be implemented beginning AY 24/25; and be it further

RESOLVED: By the end of AY 24/25, the ICC shall revisit the [University Curriculum Committee Memorandum February 26, 1999 \(revised April 14, 1999\)](#) and, if deemed appropriate, develop a policy outlining the content criteria for Diversity and Common Ground; and be it further

RESOLVED: By the end of AY 24/25, the ICC shall lead a review of the efficacy of the campus practice of allowing only 3 units of American Institutions to double count as GEAR, whereas EO 1100 and many California Community Colleges allow for 6 units to double count; and be it further

RESOLVED: American Institutions courses that automatically double-counted as Area D prior to this policy being passed, shall, at the request of the respective programs, be temporarily certified both as American Institutions and Area D through AY 24/25 to allow time for programs to submit proposals for certification in areas other than American Institutions, if they so choose; and be it further

RESOLVED: As impending changes are made to regulations at the state and system level, the ICC shall lead conversations regarding implications for Cal Poly Humboldt GEAR requirements. Specifically, the revised Cal-GETC is the transfer pathway to a four-year degree for California's community college students – a recent revision (effective Fall 2025) includes a single lower-division GE pattern for transfer to the CSU and UC system. Compared to the current GE requirements at Cal Poly Humboldt, the revised Cal-GETC includes a reduction of three units in lower division Area C (requires six rather than three units), eliminates Area E (three units), and adds one unit to account for the Area B science lab. The net reduction is five units. [Amendments to Title V](#) require corresponding changes to the GE requirements at each CSU to which all students (not just transfer students) will be subject. A [March 1, 2024 memo from the Chancellor's Office to Cal Poly Humboldt](#) states that "Each CSU campus could make a determination as to how to use the five units that are not included in Cal-GETC or could allow these to be "free elective" units toward the minimum units required for a baccalaureate degree (120 semester units)." And be it further

RESOLVED: The ICC shall revisit this policy in AY 28/29, after three years of implementation.

RATIONALE: The purpose of this policy is to establish guiding principles for the General Education and All University Requirements (GEAR) program at Cal Poly Humboldt, to establish guidelines for what constitutes a GEAR course, and to establish requirements for offering courses in the various GEAR areas.



Policy on GEAR Program Features and Course Certification Requirements

Policy Number

Integrated Curriculum Committee

Applies to: Faculty, students

Supersedes: [Senate Resolution 08-08/09-EP](#), [Senate Resolution 02-04/05-EP](#), [Senate Resolution 09-02/03-EP](#)

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for what constitutes a General Education and All University Requirements (GEAR) course at Cal Poly Humboldt, and to establish requirements for offering GEAR courses in the various GEAR areas. In this policy, GEAR courses are defined as all courses certified in any of the GEAR areas. Current GEAR areas are listed in Section II.1 of this policy and in the Cal Poly Humboldt [academic catalog](#).

I. Guiding Principles

1. The California State University (CSU) [EO 1100](#) describes general education as "designed to provide the knowledge, skills, experiences, and perspectives that will enable CSU students to expand their capacities to take part in a wide range of human interests and activities; to confront personal, cultural, moral, and social problems that are an inevitable part of human life; and to cultivate both the requisite skills and enthusiasm for lifelong learning."
2. Cal Poly Humboldt is committed to providing a rich, cohesive, and thoughtful GEAR experience, one that provides students with a variety of courses that speak to their interests and lived experiences and expand their understanding of the world.
3. All Cal Poly Humboldt students participate in the GEAR program as part of the bachelor's degree; thus the program must serve students across all majors.

4. The GEAR program shall be the primary vehicle for delivering a shared Humboldt-inflected curricular experience for all students, and thus we must work together across departments and programs to ensure its quality and success.
5. We value disciplinary expertise and the diversity of approaches to GEAR areas that stem from various disciplines and perspectives.
6. Some majors have external accreditation requirements that intersect with this policy. Such majors may have a necessarily high number of units that are major-specific and tied to accreditation requirements. Students in these majors may need to take major-specific GEAR courses with more than typical prerequisites or units, may need to meet multiple major/GEAR requirements within a single course, and may need to meet GEAR requirements through completion of the major. The campus bodies responsible for review of GEAR proposals shall provide support for, and fully consider, circumstances related to accreditation while also staying true to the spirit of this policy and remaining in compliance with the applicable CSU executive orders, CSU policies, sections of the California Code of Regulations, and related Cal Poly Humboldt campus policies.

II. Policy Details

1. A GEAR course must meet the guidelines laid out in applicable CSU executive orders, CSU policies, sections of the California Code of Regulations, and Cal Poly Humboldt campus policies, including that it must address the content criteria of the areas in which it is certified. The content criteria are, in the applicable policies and documents, variably referred to as knowledge, skills, experiences, perspectives, competencies, goals, objectives, etc. The content criteria and course number/unit requirements for each GEAR area are currently as follows:
 - a. **CSU General Education (GE) Requirements (Table 1a):** [CSU Policy ID 8919100 \(EO 1100\)](#), pursuant to Education Code 66763, 89032, 66745-66749.7. [Title 5, California Code of Regulations](#), sections 40402.1, 40403, 40405, 40405.1, 40405.2, 40405.3, 40405.4, and 40508. [Amendments to Title V](#), effective Fall 2025, will change these requirements and their designations.

Table 1a. CSU General Education (GE) Requirements

Current Subject Area Distribution Requirements	Revisions effective Fall 2025. Final number/letter designations TBD
Oral Communication, Area A1	Oral Communication, Area 1C
Written Communication, Area A2	English Composition, Area 1A

Critical Thinking, Area A3	Critical Thinking, Area 1B
Physical Science, Area B1	Physical Science, Area 5A
Life Science, Area B2	Biological Science, Area 5B
Laboratory Activity (in B1/B2), Area B3	Laboratory, Area 5C
Scientific Inquiry and Quantitative Reasoning, Upper Division Area B	Physical or Biological Science, Upper Division Area 5
Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning, Area B4	Mathematical Concepts and Quantitative Reasoning, Area 2
Arts, Area C1	Arts, Area 3A
Humanities, Area C2	Humanities, Area 3B
Arts and Humanities, Upper Division Area C	Arts or Humanities, Upper Division Area 3
Social Sciences, Area D	Social and Behavioral Sciences, Area 4
Social Sciences, Upper Division Area D	Social and Behavioral Sciences, Upper Division Area 4
Lifelong Learning and Self-Development, Area E	No longer required
Ethnic Studies, Area F	Ethnic Studies, Area 6

- b. **American Institutions:** [CSU Policy ID 14110255](#) (formerly EO 1061) pursuant to [Section 40404 of Title 5](#) of the California Code of Regulations.
 - c. **Diversity and Common Ground:** [University Curriculum Committee Memorandum February 26, 1999 \(revised April 14, 1999\)](#).
 - d. **GWAR:** Cal Poly Humboldt [Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement Policy](#) pursuant to [CSU Policy ID 14528485 \(EO 0665\)](#).
2. The GEAR content criteria shall be clearly identified on a Cal Poly Humboldt GEAR website, currently academicprograms.humboldt.edu/content/ge-all-university-requirements-gear.
 3. For a course to be certified in a GEAR area, the associated content criteria shall be addressed in a substantial manner, i.e., as an integral part of the course and/or through substantial dedicated instruction, materials, and assignments.
 4. A GEAR course must align with at least one [GEAR program learning outcome \(PLO\)](#) – the PLO shall be one that is matched with one of the GEAR areas for which certification is

sought. The proposers must also develop a student learning outcome (SLO) that conveys the specific and measurable behaviors that students will demonstrate in order to achieve the PLO. Upon request, programs that offer GEAR courses shall participate in the corresponding assessment of GEAR PLOs.

5. A new GEAR course (or new certification for an existing course) must fill a need within, diversify, or otherwise enhance the GEAR curriculum. It is thus incumbent upon a proposal's author to identify how a new course's curriculum is sufficiently distinct from existing courses with apparent overlap.
6. A GEAR course shall typically be 3 units – this ensures that students have ample 3-unit offerings to facilitate completing GEAR requirements and thus the bachelor's degree within 120 units. The following exceptions apply unless disallowed by applicable CSU executive orders, CSU policies, sections of the California Code of Regulations:
 - a. A lower-division science laboratory course (currently area B3) may be less than 3 units. Any corresponding non-lab component shall not be less than 3 units if it can be taken without the lab component.
 - b. A stand-alone arts course (currently area C) may be less than 3 units if it may be combined with other such courses to meet the GEAR requirement. An example is a 1-unit music ensemble course that students routinely take three times. This exception applies on a limited basis when justified due to the nature of some performance-based arts courses.
 - c. A GEAR course that is 3 units may be paired with an optional related non-GEAR course, making the combination of related courses greater than 3 units while only the 3 unit course is certified as GEAR. A hypothetical example is EGPT 302, a 3-unit upper-division GEAR course that non-majors may take as a stand-alone course while Egyptology majors simultaneously enroll in EGPT 302M, a 1-unit non-GEAR course that adds increased depth for majors.
 - d. Keeping in mind that high-unit GEAR courses may adversely affect students' graduation timeline, a GEAR course may be more than 3 units only when the additional unit(s) is (are) necessary to accomplish the course learning outcomes and any similar California Community College or CSU courses (to which the course articulates) are typically more than 3 units. Otherwise, a compelling justification must be made as to why an exception should be granted.
7. In line with the principle that the GEAR program, as a whole, shall be accessible to all students regardless of their pre-existing level of knowledge in the GEAR areas, each

GEAR area shall have ample course options that either have either no prerequisites or only prerequisites that are general enough that students across majors have access to them and typically take them. Within this, programs may offer GEAR courses that have prerequisites, including major-specific prerequisites, as long as the respective GEAR areas have enough options that are open to all students.

8. In line with Article 2.2.6.1 of [EO 1100](#), if a student completes a GEAR course that also satisfies requirements for a major, it shall fulfill the GEAR requirement and also fulfill (double count for) the program requirement. This stipulation shall also apply to courses that satisfy requirements for minors and certificates.
9. A program of study (major or minor) may fulfill the requirements of one (and only one) upper-division GEAR area (currently designated B, C, or D) in lieu of taking a specific course. The following stipulations apply:
 - a. The program must demonstrate that the content criteria for the GEAR area are met by two or more courses that are required for every option, pathway, concentration, emphasis, etc., of the program.
 - b. The program may not exercise this substitution if one of the required program courses is an upper-division GEAR course in the area, as the GEAR area would already be met by that course.
 - c. The approved list of majors and the courses that will be used to satisfy the GEAR requirements will be communicated to the Registrar's Office to ensure that the information is entered into the University Catalog and DARS.
 - d. If one or more of the associated program requirements is completed with a different course (e.g. transfer course or course substitution) that does not also meet the GEAR requirement, then the student will need to fulfill the GEAR requirement by taking a traditional GEAR course. This information shall be clearly communicated to students in the catalog and in DARS.
 - e. Students with multiple majors and/or minors may exercise this substitution in each major and minor if available.
10. A GEAR course may be certified for multiple GEAR areas as long as the course meets the guidelines for those areas as indicated elsewhere in this policy. The following stipulations apply:
 - a. If a course meets the content criteria of more than one of the CSU GE requirements (number/letter designated areas – Table 1a), it can gain

certification in multiple areas. Upon successful completion of a course with more than one such certification, a student, in consultation with their advisor, can select which one of the areas the course will satisfy – students cannot double-count a course for more than one CSU GE requirement.

- b. American Institutions, DCG, and GVAR are considered overlays. If a course meets the requirements of more than one overlay area, it can gain certification in multiple areas. If an overlay course also meets the criteria of one or more CSU GE requirements (Table 1a), it may also simultaneously be certified as such. Upon successful completion of such a course, a student will have completed each of the overlay areas in which the course is certified, and, if applicable, one of the CSU GE requirement requirements as described in item 10.a. The following limitations apply:

i. A course may be certified as DCG domestic or DCG non-domestic, but not both.

ii. The present policy removes the Cal Poly Humboldt stipulation (as per [Senate Resolution 02-04/05-EP and 09-02/03-EP](#)) that American Institutions may only double-count with the CSU GE requirement for social science (currently Area D). The present policy also removes that such double-counting is automatic. This policy establishes that a course may be certified as American Institutions and any CSU GE requirement *if and only if* the course meets the applicable content criteria. As per clause 3, content criteria must be addressed in a substantial manner, and thus it may be challenging to simultaneously meet the requirements of American Institutions and one or more CSU GE requirements; however, programs will not be denied the opportunity to have such a proposal considered, nor will the approval be automatic.

iii. For courses certified as American Institutions and a CSU GE requirement, students may double-count only 3 units (one course) as both American Institutions and a CSU GE requirement. If a student completes more than one such course, the additional units may count as American Institutions or a CSU GE requirement, but not both. There is no such limit on American Institutions double-counting as GVAR and DCG.

1. The 3-unit limitation on double-counting American Institutions with CSU GE requirements was put in place by Humboldt [Senate Resolution 02-04/05-EP and 09-02/03-EP](#), whereas Article 2.2.6.2

of [EO 1100](#) allows CSU campuses to count up to 6 semester units, which is typically two courses.

- c. Upper/lower division GEAR designation shall comply with the course numbering policy. Thus, a course may not be certified as both a lower division and upper division area requirement.
 - i. This policy removes the Cal Poly Humboldt practice that if a student completes a course certified in both American Institutions and a CSU GE requirement (Table 1a), the CSU GE requirement will be fulfilled at the lower-division level regardless of whether the course is upper or lower division. An American Institutions course may be either upper division or lower division, and any CSU GE certifications must be at the corresponding level.

11. For a department/program to offer a course in a given GEAR area, potential instructors must be versed in the GEAR content criteria well enough to provide a suitable learning experience for students. The GEAR certification process does not involve the vetting of specific instructors and respectfully recognizes that this is the role of department chairs in the programs that offer the courses. Thus, proposers must explain how their disciplines routinely provide at least a subset of practitioners with the knowledge necessary to teach the area content criteria in a competent manner. The department chairs and associate deans of the respective college, who review proposals before they proceed to the GEAR subcommittee, shall evaluate this aspect before signing off. The full ICC, which includes representation from the associate deans and faculty from all colleges, shall further discuss any cases where requisite expertise is unclear.

12. As is standard procedure for all new course and course change proposals, GEAR related and otherwise, a proposal shall include a communication record. If the communication record is extensive, proposers are encouraged to include a summary/abbreviation of communications rather than detailed back-and-forth conversation, unless otherwise relevant. The following shall be included in the communication record:

- a. Consultation with (including responses from) campus and/or community resources necessary to support the course, if applicable. Documentation must provide evidence that any necessary support will be available.
- b. Communication with programs for which the course is part of the curriculum: Presently, a list of the pertinent programs can be obtained by running a course impact report in Curriculog. Documentation must include evidence of having informed the impacted programs, at minimum via an email notification to the

department chair(s). Any pertinent responses should be included. Approval directly from impacted programs is not required for approval through the normal curricular processes; however, proposers are encouraged to consider reasonable requested revisions prior to proposal submission.

- c. Communication with other programs/departments that offer courses in the proposed area: This is required if a program/department is proposing certification in a GEAR area in which they have not previously offered a course. Documentation must include at minimum an email notification to the department chair(s). Approval from other programs/departments is not required for approval through the normal curricular processes; however, proposers are encouraged to consider reasonable requested revisions prior to proposal submission.
 - d. Any additional communication/consultation requested by the proposer's department chair, by the dean or associate dean of the proposer's college, or required by applicable CSU executive orders, CSU policies, or Cal Poly Humboldt policies (currently required for Area F).
13. GEAR proposals are reviewed by the GEAR subcommittee prior to full ICC review. Department chairs shall be kept apprised of GEAR certification proposals that have advanced to the GEAR subcommittee for review; for example, they shall be listed on publicly available agenda and/or minutes. Department chairs shall also be informed when proposals are slated for full ICC review prior to committee vote. Proposals advanced from the ICC to the senate shall be included in the senate agenda. During this process, feedback shall be considered, but approval from parties outside the normal curricular process is not required.
14. Additional requirements per GEAR area:
- a. Written communication (currently area A2) and Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning (currently area B4) courses must meet additional requirements outlined in [CSU Policy ID 13031315 \(EO 1110\)](#). Among the requirements are those related to success rates, for which oversight is coordinated by the Office of Academic Programs.
 - b. Ethnic Studies (currently area F) courses must abide by the Cal Poly Humboldt GEAR Area F Implementation Policy.

- c. Courses identified in the catalog as graduate level (500, 600, 700) and undergraduate and graduate co-listed courses (400/500) may not be certified as GE Area A-F (see [P14-05](#)).
15. GEAR courses will undergo periodic recertification in alignment with academic program review cycles. Programs will have the entirety of a seven-year review period to complete all GEAR recertifications for that program. The recertification process shall involve reviewing how the course meets the provisions of this policy by completing and submitting a GEAR certification form in Curriculog. The ICC may also undertake periodic review of specific GEAR areas as deemed necessary. The recertification process is described in Appendix A.
 16. As per [EO 1100](#), courses certified as a CSU GE requirement (Table 1a) that have not been offered in a five-year period shall have GE certification removed. Cal Poly Humboldt shall apply this stipulation to all GEAR courses, with the specification that recertification will count as “offering” for this purpose. The Office of Academic Programs shall oversee this process and shall ensure that departments are notified of GEAR certifications set to expire with enough leeway to plan a course offering or apply for recertification without lapse.

III. Workflow

- Oversight for the GEAR certification process shall be as described in the: *Faculty Handbook - Integrated Curriculum Committee Bylaws and Rules of Procedure Appendix G*, and the *Faculty Handbook - Integrated Curriculum Committee Workflow Diagram*. Both documents are linked on the [University Senate website](#).
- When the proposal reaches the GEAR subcommittee, the subcommittee shall review the course for compliance with this policy, utilizing the GEAR Certification Form (Appendix B).

Appendices

- Appendix A: [GEAR Recertification Process \(DRAFT\)](#)
- Appendix B: [GEAR Certification Form \(DRAFT\)](#)

Related Policies

- [ASA 2017-27](#) Implementation Guidance for Executive Order (EO) 1110; Assessment of Academic Preparation & Placement in 1st-Year Gen Ed Written Communication & Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning Courses
- Cal Poly Humboldt Area F Policy

Expiration Date

n/a

History

GEAR Subcommittee of the Integrated Curriculum Committee: 3/26/2024

Integrated Curriculum Committee: 4/2/2024

Reviewed: University Senate: X/X/2024

Reviewed: Provost: X/X/2024

DRAFT 4-2024