

To: Integrated Curriculum Committee

From: OAA Working Group

Re: Proposal for encouraging innovative experimental courses in General Education/All-university Requirements (GEAR)

Rationale and description

As the GEAR Committee moves ahead with its comprehensive proposal for restructuring General Education at HSU, it would be useful to pilot new pedagogical and organizational approaches to GE courses to inform the specifics for the new structure. In fact, a number of faculty are interested in trying out new ways of facilitating student achievement of GEAR learning outcomes via experimental Special Topics courses that are approved for a limited timespan as satisfying specific GEAR requirements. The course could be offered a maximum of three times as a Special Topic before undergoing curricular review for inclusion in the catalog.

New courses/course clusters (3, 6, or 9 units) would be experimental in one or more of the following ways:

- Extensive use of new pedagogical approaches, such as “flipped” instruction, hybrid, or other models
- Thoughtful use of block scheduling, such as back-to-back timeslots (with flexible time-boundaries between them) for thematically related or integrated courses that satisfy different GE areas
- Focus on content that is multidisciplinary (e.g., structured around ideas like “rivers”), problem-based (e.g. structured around substantial problems like “medical care” or “unemployment”), or broadly metadisciplinary (e.g., structured around broad areas like “humanities” or “science”)

We strongly encourage proposals to incorporate a metadisciplinary perspective, even in courses grounded in specific disciplines.

Approval process for initial offering

Each college will solicit brief proposals for GEAR pilots and will coordinate their submission to the ICC for review, ideally before the semester schedule is posted. Proposals should include the following:

1. A brief description of the course(s) and the approach that is planned, addressing
 - a. how the proposed course is different from what is currently being done (i.e., what is it that makes the proposed course innovative?)
 - b. how the proposed course will foster student success
2. A GEAR Outcomes matrix that lists
 - a. the current outcomes for the GEAR requirement
 - b. for each of the outcomes, a specific sample activity that would engage students in addressing that outcome

- c. for each of the outcomes, an example of the kinds of student work that could be sampled for assessment of the outcome.
3. A course outline/ sample syllabus
4. A description of the process planned for assessing the GEAR outcomes addressed by the course.
5. Proposed class size, SCUs, WTUs, and statement of support from the appropriate chair(s) and college dean(s)

The Academic Master Planning subcommittee will review and approve the GEAR status of the special-topics course, and the faculty involved in the course will agree to provide ICC with a brief evaluation of the course after it has been taught the first time. The faculty will share the results of their pilot in a public forum such as the Institute for Student Success.

Initial evaluation process

After the first offering of the course, the faculty involved will submit a follow-up summary that includes:

1. Entering enrollment, number of students who completed the course, distribution of student levels (freshmen, sophomores)
2. Average course grade, aggregated and disaggregated by URM/non-URM
3. Results of learning outcomes assessment
4. Brief description of lessons learned and intention to offer again (or not).

Process for second and third offering

The faculty members involved with the course will consult with their department chair, the dean of their college, and the vice provost to determine if and when the experimental course can be offered a second and third time.