

Synopsis of Northern Michigan University's General Education Program

Description

The NMU program focuses on eight LEAP-based learning outcomes: Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis, Social Responsibility in a Diverse World, Integrative Thinking, Human Expression, Perspectives on Society, and Scientific Inquiry. Students must complete ten courses spread across the components, achieving a "C" (2.0) average across all programmatic courses. Courses accepted into the program, as vetted by NMU's General Education Council (see <https://www.nmu.edu/gec/grad-requirements>), may also be used in the student's major or minor concentrations. To be included in the program, a significant portion of any given course must be dedicated to (a) the critical thinking component and (b) one of the learning outcomes for its respective focal component and the majority of the coursework should be linked to these outcomes. All dimensions of a learning outcome must be substantively addressed by a course, with the understanding that some dimensions of a learning outcome may be more fully explored than others. Departments have developed a proficiency standard for each dimension that is justified based on the nature of any given course.

Assessment

Since the General Education Program at NMU becomes operational in the fall of 2017 (thereby replacing the existing "Liberal Studies Program"), formal assessment of outcomes has yet to be initiated (with pilot testing and refinement of assessment reporting to commence in 2018). Once the system has been validated (anticipated by 2019), the General Education Program will undergo a process of continual assessment. Each year, two-to-three programmatic components (as well as the critical thinking component) will undergo review so that over three years all courses in the program are assessed. The cycle will be repeated, in the seventh year the entire program will be reviewed, and the cycle will commence again, thus ensuring continual quality improvement. For each course, the home department must submit a rubric-based report, materials from all sections offered in the year that the course is being assessed, and aggregated analysis for all students who completed the course. For each course, departments will report the percentage of students who were (a) not yet proficient, (b) proficient, or (c) exceeding proficiency in each of the elements of the two relevant component dimensions being assessed.

Additional LEAP Efforts

There are four additional baccalaureate graduation requirements that students must complete beyond NMU's General Education Program: (a) a laboratory science course; (b) a world cultures course; (c) written English competency; and (d) mathematics competency. While the baccalaureate graduation requirements are not, strictly speaking, part of the General Education Program, they often can be fulfilled by courses that meet various LEAP-related general education components (see: <http://www.nmu.edu/bulletin1617/node/89>).