

**General Education: The
Human Community**

Curriculum and Instruction Handbook

April 2021

General Education Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is a two-part document. The first part provides an overview of the General Education program and its faculty governance structure. This includes the program's philosophy, the "Guiding Principles," and a description of the General Education Council and its oversight responsibilities.

The second part presents the curriculum and instruction (C&I) processes by which faculty can propose curricular changes to the program. This section includes explanations of Curriculog procedures as well as the parallel General Education C&I approval process. Since its inception in 1997-8, the General Education Program has encouraged experimentation, evaluation, and especially faculty input to maintain its integrity.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Philosophy

General Education: The Human Community is the core curriculum for all JMU students regardless of major or program of study. Its purpose is to provide students with a liberal education that emphasizes connections across academic disciplines as well as a variety of core skill-sets and perspectives. Courses in the program are mapped to learning outcomes which are organized into five clusters, each emphasizing unique skills, rationales, methodologies and disciplinary approaches. Taken together, courses in a student's chosen major and the General Education program are essential and complementary of the undergraduate experience.

Mission

In the Liberal Arts tradition, General Education: The Human Community aspires to create informed global citizens of the 21st century. We challenge our community of students and faculty to engage in personal and collective reflection, development, and action.

Goals

- Students will understand the historical and contemporary distinctions and interconnections among people, institutions, and communities that create, preserve, and transmit culture and knowledge in the arts, sciences, mathematics, social sciences, and humanities.
- Students will become skilled in questioning, investigating, analyzing, evaluating, and communicating.
- Students will participate in a variety of aesthetic and civic experiences reflecting human concerns and values that transcend the limits of specialization.

Cluster Structure

Cluster One: Skills for the 21st Century (9 credit hours & competency test)

- Critical Thinking
- Human Communication
- Writing
- Information Literacy

Cluster Two: Arts and Humanities (9 credit hours)

- Human Questions and Contexts
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Literature

Cluster Three: The Natural World (10 credit hours)

- Quantitative Reasoning
- Physical Principles
- Natural Systems
- Lab Experience

Cluster Four: Social and Cultural Processes (7 credit hours)

- American Experience
- Global Experience

Cluster Five: Individuals in the Human Community (6 credit hours)

- Wellness Domain
- Sociocultural Domain

Each cluster has a faculty governance committee composed of faculty representatives who teach General Education courses in the cluster as well as a representative from CARS to assist assessing student learning. Each discipline or program offering a course or courses within the cluster has at least one faculty representative. The cluster committee considers issues such as: addition or deletion of a course, approval of experimental courses, proposed changes to learning outcomes, maintenance of the assessment instruments and review of the results, structural changes to the cluster, and advises on the General Education program. On curricular issues, the cluster committee submits its decision to the GEC. A Cluster Coordinator chairs the committee.

Each cluster has a specific set of learning outcomes that guide the cluster's curriculum by indicating what each student should be able to know, demonstrate, evaluate, or understand after completing the requirement. The learning outcomes can be found at:
<https://www.jmu.edu/gened/LearningOutcomes.shtml>.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PROGRAM CURRICULUM

1. General Education: The Human Community is the core curriculum for all JMU students regardless of major or program of study. Its purpose is to provide students with a liberal education that emphasizes connections across academic disciplines.
2. General Education: The Human Community is based on learning outcomes rather than courses, and these outcomes are divided into clusters. Each cluster provides students with learning opportunities that address its specific outcomes.
3. Every course in the program must meet the learning outcomes for its intended area within a cluster and should be suitable for the general population of students. In addition, there should be areas of consistency across sections of a particular course, agreed-upon among the faculty who teach it.
4. Any change to the learning outcomes must first be approved by the relevant cluster committees and then the General Education Council (GEC).
5. Any change to the organization of a cluster (e.g., its groups, tracks, areas, domains, or requirements) must first be approved by the relevant cluster committees and then the GEC.
6. All students complete Cluster One during their first academic year at JMU because critical thinking, oral and written communication, and information literacy are foundational to inquiry in the human community. All clusters are responsible for reinforcing the learning outcomes initiated in Cluster One.
7. Major, minor, and pre-professional programs may choose to require courses that are part of General Education: The Human Community, so long as these requirements are clearly listed in the catalog. However, no major, minor, or pre-professional program can require its students to take a particular course in Cluster One.
8. The number of courses in an area of a cluster shall be limited in order to accommodate scheduling and to promote coherence in the cluster.
9. Any course included in the program must be designed so that multiple faculty members can teach it and should be offered in multiple sections every semester. If exceptional circumstances warrant them, alternative scheduling arrangements may be permitted, pending consideration by the relevant administrators.
10. Each cluster will have a procedure to assess students' ability to meet its learning outcomes. Assessment data will be used to promote continuous development and strengthening of each cluster.

11. The evaluation and development of the program will be ongoing. The General Education program will participate in the Academic Program Review (APR) process in a ten-year cycle. This review will follow the APR instructions and calendar schedule as established in the Provost's Office of Academic Affairs.

12. The stability and academic excellence of General Education: The Human Community depends upon fully qualified, experienced, and committed faculty. In general, the participation of part-time instructors and graduate students in the program should be limited.

General Education Council: Responsibilities

Responsibilities

The General Education Council (GEC) oversees JMU's general education program and serves as the program's college-level curricular body. The GEC determines approvals and deletions of program courses: modifications of program courses, including title and number changes; alterations to the goals or learning outcomes; and revisions of the program overall. The GEC only receives proposals regarding specific curricular actions as recommendations from the cluster committees. For curriculum approval purposes, all voting members of the GEC constitute the General Education C&I Committee. Upon receipt of a recommendation, GEC members determine the appropriateness for meeting the learning outcomes of the relevant cluster, the program's "Guiding Principles" and overall goals. The GEC votes on the recommendation.

The GEC should have an active role in promoting opportunities for faculty development related to General Education Program. Due to its curricular function, the GEC also advises on matters of program policy and direction. GEC members should be engaged with the General Education program. Such engagement includes the following:

- Commitment to student success in the General Education program
- Commitment to best teaching practices in General Education courses
- An awareness of the unique structure of the General Education program at JMU
- Active participation in discussions regarding proposed changes in courses, clusters, learning outcomes, assessment strategies
- Voting members serve as the program's Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) Committee
- Follow the organizations that attend to General Education and liberal learning issues nationally (AAC&U, AGLS)
- Actively support the signature features of the General Education Program (e.g., General Education Student Conference)
- Foster effective communication between GEC and the constituency they represent
- Actively participate in scheduled academic program reviews
- Understand their role in curriculum development in the General Education program
- Complete tasks as assigned for meeting preparation
- Assist in setting the GEC annual agenda
- Engage in issues at GEC meetings

There are two standing committees within the General Education Council. They are:

- General Education Distinguished Teacher Award Committee
- General Education Student Conference Committee

The GEC can form ad hoc committees to examine specific issues or needs.

General Education Council: Membership

- Chair* (non-voting, except in cases of tie votes).
- General Education program administrators: the Associate Vice Provost of University Programs (nonvoting), and the Cluster Coordinators (5 voting members).
- Cluster Representatives, who must be full time faculty members in their respective cluster (5 voting members).
 - Candidates for these positions must be faculty who teach in the program and have at least 50 percent of their duties designated as “instructional,” i.e., related primarily to the classroom and non-administrative functions.
- College Representatives,** who must be full time faculty members in their respective college faculty or college council (8 voting members).
 - Candidates for these positions must be faculty who teach in the program and have at least 50 percent of their duties designated as “instructional,” i.e., related primarily to the classroom and non-administrative functions.
- University Representatives, who will include one representative each from those units that are key stakeholders in the program (4 voting members).
 - Faculty Senate
 - Libraries
 - Center for Assessment and Research Studies (CARS)
 - University Advising
- Two Student Representatives from the SGA (1 vote)

All GEC representatives serve a term of three years, and they can serve two consecutive three-year terms. The Faculty Senate and SGA representatives serve a term of one year.

All GEC representatives are to attend the monthly meetings. Representatives should designate a substitute when absent. If extended absences are anticipated, a new appointment should be pursued.

*GEC Chair. The Chair serves for two years and must have served on GEC and be familiar with the General Education Program prior to their election. In consultation with General Education Program staff, the Chair sets the agenda for GEC meetings. The Chair provides guidance during the General Education Program Academic Program Review (APR).

**Colleges:

- Arts and Letters
- Business
- Education
- Health and Behavioral Studies
- Integrated Science and Engineering
- Science and Mathematics
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Honors

General Education Academic Program Reviews

The General Education program participates in various scheduled academic program reviews. The university required Academic Program Review (APR) process should allow for a thoughtful examination of the overall program and the learning outcomes as well as a review of all courses in the program. Thus, the APR should help identify successful areas of the program as well as those requiring change. The review requires clear specification of desired educational outcomes, evidence of achievement and documentation of strategic planning and its implementation. Designed to foster improvement in the quality of teaching and student learning, the APR should also make faculty aware of the General Education program's goals and learning outcomes. The ultimate goal is the overall improvement of the program.

The Academic Program Review office provides an introduction to the review process at <https://www.jmu.edu/academic-affairs/apr/index.shtml> and detailed review instructions at <https://www.jmu.edu/academic-affairs/documents/apr-instructions.pdf>. For a schedule of academic program reviews, see <https://www.jmu.edu/academic-affairs/documents/ap>.

The General Education program also undergoes annual review. Each Cluster Coordinator submits an annual report to the Associate Vice Provost of University Programs that addresses issues such as enrollments, assessment, staffing, and resources among other things. In addition, each cluster participates in annual assessments using instruments developed or selected by faculty in each cluster committee. Assessments are administered to first-year students in August and on "A-Day" in February to students who have completed 45-70 credit hours at JMU. The General Education program has administered these assessments since the program began; they provide longitudinal data on student learning. Results are distributed to faculty teaching in the General Education program to foster curricular and pedagogical improvements.

In addition, complying with the 2017 State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) requirement that institutions have regular assessment and report on student achievement in six specific competency areas, General Education partners with the Center for Assessment and Research Studies (CARS) to produce state-mandated reports. SCHEV requires reports on Critical Thinking, Written Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, and Civic Engagement, and one other area. JMU chose to provide reports on Ethical Reasoning and Information Literacy. SCHEV requires reporting on two of the required competency areas each year. The schedule can be found at <https://www.jmu.edu/assessment/AcademicProgram/SCHEVRporting.shtml>

Chairs of the General Education Council

Claire Lyons (Psychology)	2021-
Kathy Clarke (Libraries)	2017-2021
Phil Heap (Economics)	2013-2017
Terri Prodoehl (Health Sciences)	2011-2013
Craig Abrahamson (Psychology)	2007-2011
Jeff Andre (Psychology)	2005-2007
Skip Hyser (History)	2002-2005
Linda Cabe Halpern (Art History)	1999-2002

Curriculum & Instruction Processes

Introduction

Faculty may propose changes to the General Education curriculum on behalf of departments. These proposals begin the approval process in Curriculog; moving through academic unit, college, and university level C&I committees. However, General Education proposals must proceed through a simultaneous, parallel approval process involving the appropriate cluster committee and the General Education Council (GEC). The cluster committee must approve a proposal before it moves to the GEC for its review. See the flow chart on page 14.

Faculty seeking to include a new course in the General Education program should consult with the appropriate Cluster Coordinator before beginning the process in Curriculog. Consultation ensures the course proposal aligns with the cluster's learning outcomes and the program's guiding principles, which uphold the integrity of the curriculum. This consultation is similar to the consultation of an academic unit head about a proposed major or program course.

The next steps involve faculty governance of the program and explains the parallel approval process. The parallel approvals ensure that only courses approved by the academic unit and college are considered for inclusion in the program. Cluster committees must approve a course for inclusion in the General Education program. This corresponds to the course approval on the academic unit level. The GEC must approve courses for the program, which corresponds to approval on the college level. The GEC retains responsibility for determining if a course meets the relevant program outcomes and is appropriate for inclusion in one of the clusters. By approving courses for inclusion into a cluster, the General Education curriculum process ensures that approved courses meet the program's goals and learning outcomes.

There should be ample opportunities for meetings and discussion of proposed courses among course originator(s), the academic unit and college, the C&I committees, the relevant cluster committee and the General Education Council. In addition, because course proposals are posted on Curriculog, all faculty have opportunities to examine and comment on proposed courses for the General Education program.

After approval in Curriculog, GEC approved curricular changes are forwarded as recommendations to the Associate Vice Provost of University Programs (dean's level review), and then to university-wide review, and finally to the Vice Provost for Faculty and Curriculum. The Committee on Academic Programs (CAP) reviews proposed significant modification to the General Education program.

Changes to the curricular process within the General Education program are also made by a vote of the GEC, providing those changes are consistent with university policy.

In matters of policy and direction of the General Education program, the GEC is advisory to the Cluster Coordinators and the Associate Vice Provost of University Programs.

Below are several examples of curriculum and instruction actions that require General Education program approval. Instructions for adding or deleting a course, adding an experimental course to the curriculum, as well as programmatic changes are provided in this handbook.

- Adding or deleting a course from the General Education program
- Adding or deleting a course in the General Education program from a new or existing major or minor
- Making a General Education program course a prerequisite for a course offered by any other program (major, minor, pre-professional, degree)
- Adding or deleting a General Education program requirement, such as a competency test
- Changing the structure of the General Education program
- Adding, deleting, or modifying the learning outcomes associated with an area of the General Education program

C & I Chair Duties

In November 2009, the GEC voted to create the position of Curriculum and Instruction Chair. The term of service is two years with the tenure staggered to overlap that of the GEC Chair and with multiple consecutive terms permissible. Duties of the position are:

- Chairs the General Education Council when it acts in its capacity as a C&I committee
- Coordinates curriculum proposals for the GEC (this ensures proposals are made available to GEC members in time for voting)
- Acts as a resource for C&I questions (requires familiarity with C&I procedures)
- Votes in Curriculog on behalf of GEC
- Serves on C&I Chairs Committee
- Serves on the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP)

General Education Council curricular procedures are part of the university's broader curriculum approval process. The GEC C&I Chair serves on both the university's C&I Chairs Committee as well as the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP) and can provide explanation for and understanding about the impact of any proposed curricular changes before these two bodies.

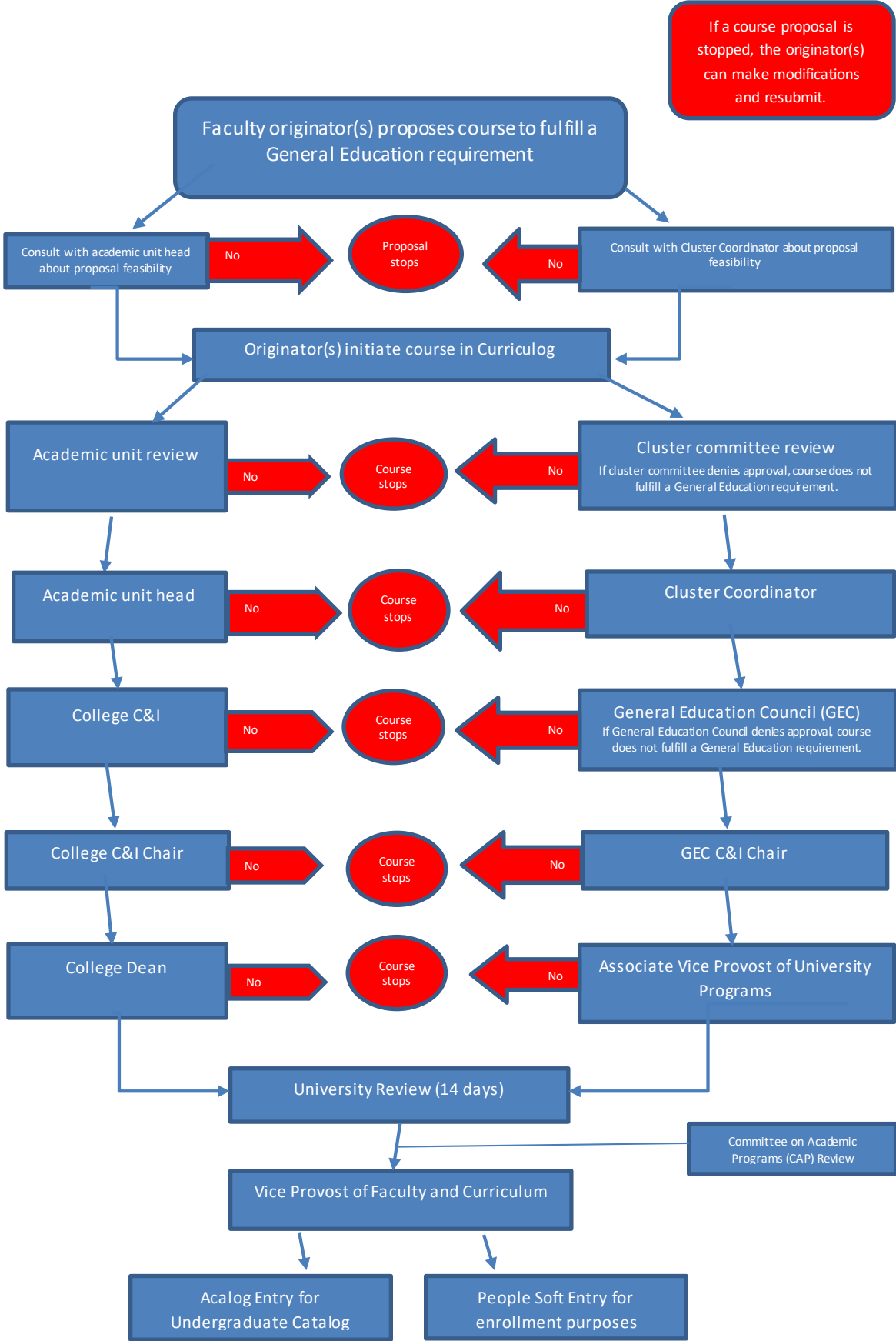
NEW COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS

This detailed outline explains the steps required to develop a new course proposal and obtain approval for inclusion within the General Education program.

1. A faculty member interested in developing a new course for inclusion in the General Education curriculum must ensure the proposed course meets the cluster learning outcomes. See: <https://www.jmu.edu/gened/LearningOutcomes.shtml>
2. The new course originator(s) must consult with the relevant academic unit head(s) and cluster coordinator to assess its feasibility from each unit's perspective. The program's "Guiding Principles" must be adhered to. No course can be considered unless it has one or more home academic units willing to house and staff it with multiple full-time instructors each semester. One or both units must give authorization before proceeding to the next step.
3. The proposed new course will follow the usual curriculum process in Curriculog. The parallel General Education review process can also begin, but only courses approved by the academic unit and college are eligible for inclusion in the General Education program. If either the academic unit or college declines the course, the proposal stops.
4. The next step in the process is to consult Curriculog training tutorials at <https://www.jmu.edu/curriculum/training/>. This site offers information in pdf and video formats. It also provides a link to Curriculog. Another link to Curriculog is: <https://jmu.curriculog.com/>
5. The originator(s) initiates the proposed course in Curriculog. The originator(s) must indicate the General Education cluster and area for the course in **Step 3: Complete the Required Fields**. Also in Step 3, the originator(s) must provide the course prefix (e.g. SOCI, HTH, ISCI), number, course title, and course description. A syllabus is required. For General Education purposes, the originator(s) must explain how the course will meet cluster or domain learning outcomes in an entry box.
6. The GEC C&I chair will inform the appropriate Cluster Coordinator and cluster committee and provide the link so they can begin their formal review of the proposed course. This step parallels the unit level reviews by the academic unit and academic unit head. The Cluster Coordinator will convene the cluster committee to discuss the course and its possible addition to the General Education curriculum. The committee will vote on whether to include, or not include, the course in the General Education program. Approval by a majority of the cluster committee membership is required to advance to the next step in the process. The Cluster Coordinator will vote in Curriculog and inform the GEC C&I chair of the decision.

7. If the cluster committee approves the course for inclusion in the General Education curriculum, the GEC C&I chair will provide GEC with the Curriculog link to the course proposal for their review. The C&I chair will convene the GEC to discuss the course and its possible addition to the General Education curriculum. This step parallels the college-level review. Approval by a majority of the GEC membership is required to add the course to the General Education curriculum.
8. The GEC C&I chair will vote on the course proposal in Curriculog according to the decision of the GEC. This step is the college C&I chair level review.
9. The Associate Vice Provost of University Programs will vote on the proposed course in Curriculog. This step is the dean's-level review.
10. If there are concerns at the university level, the proposal is submitted to the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP). Questions and concerns raised in CAP are referred to the General Education Council for resolution.
11. The Vice Provost of Faculty and Curriculum reviews all course proposals. This is the final step before courses are entered into the undergraduate catalog through Acalog.
12. Once the course is fully approved, it can be offered to fulfill a General Education requirement. The originator(s), academic unit head(s), and/or dean(s) working with the appropriate Cluster Coordinator will determine the number and size of sections offered based on the initial discussions at the start of the process. The academic unit head will oversee entry of the departmental course into the e-campus system. The General Education program coordinates and manages enrollment access to the course. The General Education program will add the course to its website, academic planner, and advising resources.
13. After the course's initial offering, the originator(s) meets with the Cluster Coordinator to evaluate how well the course met cluster learning outcomes, program "Guiding Principles," and General Education philosophy, as well as any practical issues of implementation, such as enrollment and resource issues. The cluster's annual report will include this information.

General Education C & I Process, New Course Proposal



EXPERIMENTAL COURSE APPROVAL PROCESS

Faculty can propose experimental courses for inclusion in the General Education program on a temporary basis. Such courses permit faculty to explore curricular innovation with minimal risk. These courses also allow faculty to determine student interest as well as refine course content. Experimental courses may be offered for up to two academic years (or four semesters) before undergoing the formal C&I process for course approval, or be discontinued as a General Education course offering. Courses are designated with a capital “E” (i.e., PSYC 109E) and they do not appear in the course catalog. Faculty must offer an assessment of the course and its continuance after the first offering. Below is the process for proposing an experimental course in the General Education program.

1. Experimental course originator(s) must ensure the proposed course meets the cluster learning outcomes. See: <https://www.jmu.edu/gened/LearningOutcomes.shtml>
2. A faculty member interested in developing an experimental course for inclusion in the General Education curriculum should first consult with the relevant academic unit head(s) and Cluster Coordinator to assess its feasibility from each unit’s perspective. The program’s “Guiding Principles” must be adhered to. No course can be considered unless it has one or more home academic units willing to house and staff it. Originator(s) must receive authorization from both the academic unit head and appropriate Cluster Coordinator before beginning the proposal.
3. The proposed experimental course will follow the usual curriculum process in Curriculog, as the parallel General Education review process begins. Only experimental courses approved by the academic unit are eligible for inclusion in the General Education program. If either the academic unit or academic unit head declines the course, the proposal stops.
4. Course originator(s) should consult Curriculog training tutorials at <https://www.jmu.edu/curriculum/training/> because all experimental course proposals are entered in Curriculog. This site offers information in pdf and video formats. It also provides a link to Curriculog. Another link to Curriculog is: <https://jmu.curriculog.com/>
5. The originator(s) should initiate the proposed experimental course in Curriculog, beginning at **Undergraduate Experimental Course**. To begin General Education’s parallel course review, the originator(s) must indicate the cluster and area for the course in **Step 3: Complete the Required Fields**.
6. The appropriate cluster committee and Cluster Coordinator will review the experimental course proposal. This step parallels the unit level reviews by the academic unit and academic unit head. Approval by a majority of the cluster committee membership is required to offer the course for General Education credit.

7. If the cluster committee approves the experimental course for General Education credit, the Associate Vice Provost of University Programs will review the course and determine if it should receive General Education credit. This step is the dean's-level review. GEC approval is not required for experimental courses.
8. If approved, the Cluster Coordinator will ensure proper notice is sent to University Advising for distribution to advisors and the Office of the Registrar so students receive General Education credit for the course
9. After the experimental course's initial offering, an evaluation of the course must be conducted. The originator(s) meet with the Cluster Coordinator to evaluate how well the course met cluster learning outcomes, program "Guiding Principles," and General Education philosophy, as well as any practical issues of implementation, such as enrollment and resource issues. A decision must be reached regarding continued offerings of the course.
10. If, after offering the experimental course, the originator(s) seeks to propose the course as a permanent offering, they must begin the new course proposal process.

COURSE REMOVAL PROCESS

A proposal to remove an approved course from the General Education program may originate in a cluster committee, a contributing academic unit, or a College C&I Committee.

1. The proposal originator(s) should first consult with the appropriate Cluster Coordinator and the Associate Vice Provost of University Programs.
2. The originator(s) should consult Curriculog training tutorials at <https://www.jmu.edu/curriculum/training/> since all course removals are entered in Curriculog. This site offers information in pdf and video formats. It also provides a link to Curriculog. Another link to Curriculog is: <https://jmu.curriculog.com/>
3. The originator(s) initiates the proposed course removal in Curriculog. The originator(s) must indicate the course is in the General Education curriculum.
4. The Cluster Coordinator and the cluster committee reviews the course removal proposal. They can solicit feedback from contributing academic units and other constituencies. A majority of the cluster committee members must approve removing the course from the General Education program.
5. If the cluster committee approves course removal, then the Cluster Coordinator informs the GEC C&I Chair, who provides the course removal materials to the GEC for their review and decision. Approval by a majority of the GEC membership is required to delete the course from the General Education curriculum.
6. The GEC C&I Chair enters the decision in Curriculog, as does the Associate Vice Provost of University Programs.

Structure Approval, Modification, or Deletion Process

Any change to the organization of a cluster (e.g., its arrangement of groups, areas, domains or requirements) constitutes a change to its structure. A proposal to change a cluster's organizational structure may originate in a cluster committee, an academic unit, or a college C&I Committee. Examples of possible proposals include but are not limited to the following: the creation or deletion of an area or domain, the inclusion of a new area or domain; and the addition of non-credit bearing requirement.

1. The proposal originator(s) should first consult with the appropriate Cluster Coordinator and the Associate Vice Provost of University Programs.
2. The originator(s) should consult Curriculog training tutorials at <https://www.jmu.edu/curriculum/training/> since all course removals are entered in Curriculog. This site offers information in pdf and video formats. It also provides a link to Curriculog. Another link to Curriculog is: <https://jmu.curriculog.com/>
3. The originator(s) posts a proposal to **Undergraduate Program Modify** in Curriculog.
4. The Cluster Coordinator meets with the cluster committee for thorough review and seeks feedback from contributing academic units and other constituencies. A majority of the cluster committee members must approve the structural change or modification.
5. If the cluster committee votes to approve the proposal, then the Cluster Coordinator contacts the GEC C&I Chair, who provides the GEC with the materials for their review.
6. A majority of the GEC membership must approve the structural change or modification.
7. If the GEC approves the proposal, it moves to the Associate Vice Provost of University Programs for approval.
8. The General Education program staff takes the necessary steps to make the change effective for fall of the next academic year.

Proposals that could significantly modify the General Education program, such as reconfiguring clusters or altering total number of program credit hours, must be submitted to the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP) after approval by the GEC. The GEC and/or the appropriate cluster committee must resolve in a timely manner any questions and concerns arising within CAP. If the CAP approves the proposal, then the Vice Provost for Faculty and Curriculum provides the final review.