

## Durham College - General Education Courses

### Introduction

This document is designed to assist faculty members in the development, delivery and review of General Education (GNED) courses at Durham College. The Durham College policy and procedure ([ACAD-103: General Education](#)) is the responsibility of the Office of the Executive Vice-President, Academic. All GNED courses are offered through the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, with direction provided by the General Education Proposal and Course Review Committee.

### Ministry of Colleges and Universities, GNED Requirement

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU), defines the GNED Requirement in Appendix C of the Minister's Binding Policy Directive, [Framework for Programs of Instruction](#) (2009) as follows: "The purpose of General Education in the Ontario college system is to contribute to the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity, and richness of the human experience; who are able to establish meaning through this consciousness; and, who, as a result, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work.

General Education strengthens student's generic skills, such as critical analysis, problem solving, and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and / or societal importance" (pg. 21).

The Framework for Programs of Instruction, Binding Policy Directive, requires that programs of study (Diploma and Advanced Diploma) must include a **minimum of three** (maximum of five) GNED courses. Durham College Certificate, Ontario College Certificate, Graduate Certificate and Apprenticeship programs are exempt from the requirement, and inclusion of GNED courses into the program of study is optional.

### General Education Themes

GNED courses are intended to engage students in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline *outside their main field of study* and increase their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. The MCU GNED requirement outlines five course themes that must be followed when developing GNED courses. As per the MCU Framework for Programs of Instruction, the themes are:

**Social and Cultural Understanding:** Social and Cultural Understanding courses deal broadly with major social and cultural themes. These courses may also stress the nature and validity of historical evidence and the variety of historical interpretation of events. Courses will provide students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic, or linguistic characteristics.

**Personal Understanding:** Personal Understanding courses focus on understanding the individual including his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. These courses also allow students to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses

fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

**Arts in Society:** Courses in Arts in Society provide students with an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, artist and writer's perceptions, and the means by which these perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. These courses also provide an appreciation for the aesthetic values used in examining works of art, and possibly a direct experience expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

**Science and Technology:** Science and Technology courses stress scientific inquiry and focus on basic or fundamental questions of science. They may be formulated from traditional basic courses in such areas of study as biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, or agriculture. As well, courses related to understanding the role and functions of computers (e.g., data management and information processing), and assorted computer-related technologies are offered in a non-applied manner to provide students the opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices in society.

**Civic Life:** Civic Life courses provide students with an understanding of the meaning of freedom, rights, and participation in community and public life in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government in Canada and/or in an international context. These courses may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.

For an in-depth understanding of the five themes with descriptions, see [GNED Themes](#) or review the MCU Framework for Programs of Instruction.

### GNED Student Choice – Elective

The Durham College policy/procedure (ACAD-103: General Education) indicates that all GNED courses will be elective in nature, meaning, students may exercise personal choice and select GNED courses from an approved pool offered by the college. Providing students with choice invites their development of personal goals that reflect individual interests. If specific GNED course content is deemed critical or mandatory to any program's learning outcomes, then that content will be delivered in a vocational course, not a GNED course, and, as a result, students in some programs may not be able to access specific GNED courses due to the content being related to their specific field or discipline.

### What are the characteristics of a General Education course?

1. GNED courses must align with one of the five GNED themes as outlined above.
2. GNED courses should focus on big-picture understanding and knowledge acquisition rather than applied skill development.
3. GNED courses complement student's vocational learning across a wide variety of programs.

4. GNEC courses enable students to contribute positively to society through introductory knowledge or exposure to broad-based theory and content. GNEC courses should focus on the development of general knowledge and provide opportunity for critical reflection on personal and societal topics and issues.
5. GNEC curriculum should be an introductory exploration of the subject. Courses should be designed for students to achieve introductory, or at most, an intermediate understanding of the content.
6. No prior knowledge or skill should be assumed, therefore GNEC courses are stand-alone learning opportunities that do not have pre-requisites or co-requisites. GNEC courses do not require specialized skills or equipment for students' success.
7. For program and institutional credit transfer and mobility, all GNEC courses will be delivered at 42 hours (3 hours per week) and be assigned a credit value of 3.
8. GNEC course learning outcomes (CLOs) should provide students with an opportunity to explore the subject at an introductory or intermediary level. The content of the CLOs should be specific to the subject of the GNEC and avoid reference to "how to" vocational content.
9. GNEC courses should include assessments and evaluation that use multiple and varied assessment techniques. These should require students to engage with personal, interpersonal, communication, and problem-solving and critical thinking skills.
10. GNEC courses support the development of [Essential Employability Skills](#).

#### GNEC Course Proposal Approval

New GNEC course proposals must be submitted to the General Education Proposal and Course Review Committee for review and approval. Typically, the School of Interdisciplinary Studies will issue a call for GNEC course proposals in the winter semester, as course inventory dictates. The committee will assess submissions based on subject area, proposed curriculum and perceived interest to students and then make recommendations for development.

#### GNEC Course Development

Following GNEC course approval from the General Education Proposal and Course Review Committee, a faculty member may develop the course outline and curriculum (e.g., learning activities, assessments, and presentation material). The Centre for Academic and Faculty Enrichment (CAFE) offers faculty support in course outline development. Course outlines are uploaded to WebCOT for final approval.

The CAFE recommends using the [Jump-Start](#) model for GNEC course lesson planning, learning activities and curriculum. This model ensures an evidence-based practice of designing courses that emphasizes the use of activities to engage the student, the presentation of a manageable amount of information, the opportunity for students to practice it, and then the consolidation of learning before moving on to the next unit of study.



## GNET Annual Course Review

To support both course development and the annual review of course outlines, consider using resources available on the CAFE website. Examples below:

[General Education Quality Course Checklist](#)

[Writing Course Learning Outcomes](#)

[Essential Employability Skills](#)

Questions?

School of Interdisciplinary Studies

<http://www.durhamcollege.ca/academic-schools/school-of-interdisciplinary-studies/contact-us>

Centre for Academic and Faculty Enrichment (CAFE)

<http://cafe.durhamcollege.ca/index.php/about/staff>