

# THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Office of University General Education

## Guidelines for Design and Implementation of University General Education courses

*Please read the following guidelines before drawing up proposals for University General Education (University GE) courses. University GE course proposals should be submitted through the online General Education Course Proposal and Inventory System (GECPI) (<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/oge/gecpi>).*

### **I. Objectives, Expectations & Desired Characteristics of General Education (GE) at CUHK** (recommended by the Review Committee on General Education and approved by Senate)

#### **1. Objectives**

- furnish students with a broad intellectual perspective for dealing with the unfamiliar;
- engage students in active reflections on perennial issues, prompting them to make connections between intellectual pursuits and personal life at work, at home and in the community;
- promote an understanding of Chinese cultural heritage and of other cultural traditions;
- develop in students attitudes and skills that are conducive to critical thinking, self-expression and communication with the others;
- serve as a platform where students can extend their curiosity, read widely beyond their chosen discipline, and develop attitudes and competence as independent learners and also as team players.

#### **2. Expectations**

GE courses should aim at the same intellectual level as major courses, and should carry the same workload (in terms of reading, assignments, etc.) as major courses with the same number of units and the same level. The fact that GE courses do not as a rule go into any narrow subject in depth should not mean that they are in any way “easy” courses.

#### **3. Desired Characteristics**

(All University GE course proposals will be examined against the following criteria.)

GE courses should:

- (a) emphasize breadth and connectivity rather than depth alone;
- (b) emphasize intellectual ideals rather than skills;
- (c) give an overall perspective of the basic academic framework, concept and methodology of the subject concerned;
- (d) relate the subject matters to human experience and/or modern life;
- (e) require neither prerequisite nor specialized technical knowledge beyond the basic aptitudes of a university student;
- (f) preferably adopt an interdisciplinary approach, and be conducted from the standpoint of multiple cross-discipline learning;
- (g) preferably encourage both self-discovery and self-expression; and
- (h) provide the content and the intellectual depth expected of credit-bearing university courses at the same level.

## **II. Design of University GE Courses**

### **1. Learning Outcomes, Course Content and Assignment of University GE Areas:**

As the objective of University GE courses is not to impart facts or skills of a specific field of knowledge, but to instill an understanding of the values of different academic disciplines, it is desirable that a University GE course can illustrate how knowledge in the specific discipline is gained and how such knowledge is related to human concerns. University GE courses should not focus only on factual knowledge, skills or techniques.

GE courses are consolidated into four areas that are not discipline-specific but cover major areas of human concerns. The proposed classification cuts across rigid academic fields (more importantly across Faculties as administrative boundaries), and orients students to the pursuit of different aspects of human knowledge. All courses, however, must be rigorous in academic content and pedagogical method.

*Course learning outcomes should be articulated with the specific learning outcomes of the assigned University GE Areas and stated from the perspective of what students will know / be able to do, and be defined more clearly by the different levels of cognitive ability (e.g. recall of information, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis or evaluation).*

#### **UGE Area Learning Outcomes:**

##### **Area A Chinese Cultural Heritage**

This area introduces students to the essential characteristics of Chinese culture. By way of an integrated approach, students will learn to appreciate and evaluate the Chinese cultural heritage and its relevance in modern life from a broad intellectual perspective.

After studying in this area, a student will be able to:

1. identify the essential characteristics of Chinese culture;
2. recognize that Chinese culture involves different aspects and components;
3. develop a critical appreciation of Chinese culture;
4. recognize the relevance of Chinese cultures in modern life.

##### **Area B Nature, Science and Technology**

This area broadens students' perspectives on nature, science and technology. It introduces students to various principles, discoveries and methods of science. Students will learn to appraise and evaluate with a scientific attitude human's role in being part of nature and the impact of science and technology on modern life.

After studying in this area, a student will be able to:

1. describe major principles, discoveries and methods of the course's field of study;
2. apply basic scientific methods and principles to analyze issues related to nature, science and technology;
3. explore on their own: issues related to nature, science and technology that are of interest to them;
4. appraise and evaluate human's role in being part of nature;
5. appraise and evaluate the impact of science and technology on human life.

### **Area C Society and Culture**

This area enhances students' understanding of the ways in which human societies are constituted and human cultures are represented, in their generality as well as diversity. Students are introduced to the theories and/or methodologies through which social, political, economic or cultural issues are studied.

After studying in this area, a student will be able to:

1. understand better the ways in which human society and culture are formed;
2. appreciate the diversity of different cultures, values and belief;
3. apply methods studied to analyze related issues;
4. apply theories studied to explain related issues.

### **Area D Self and Humanity**

This area enables students to explore the diversity of human values, reflect on the meaning of human endeavors, and gain a better understanding of themselves.

After studying in this area, a student will be able to do at least two of the following:

1. examine one's self with a broadened perspective;
2. appreciate the diversity of values and beliefs;
3. make informed decision about moral issues;
4. articulate his/her own moral judgment;
5. appreciate creative works with a board perspective;
6. perform critical reasoning.

## **2. Double-coding (double-offering):**

As the characteristics expected of University GE courses are in general different from those of major/ minor (or even elective) courses, double-coding of University GE courses should in general be discouraged. In cases where dual codes are given, it will be required that

- (a) there should be no pre-requisite requirement. As high level departmental course are usually built on introductory courses, Level 3 or above departmental courses are normally not suitable for double-coding;
- (b) notwithstanding the alternative coding, University GE courses must possess all the characteristics of a GE course, and the inclusion of other students in the same class will not be accepted as a reason for deviation;
- (c) students registered under either course code must be treated identically in all respects, e.g., work load, grading policy, availability of tutorials etc., as the credits they earned are transferable between GE and departmental programmes;
- (d) SCGE will be the authority for granting University GE coding while it will be up to the respective Faculty Boards etc. to grant the alternate coding;

If different reading materials, tutorials or assignment are deemed desirable for students registering under departmental course code, the course should not be double-coded.

### **3. Course Registration Restrictions**

#### **(a) Major exclusion**

To serve the purpose of GE, students should not take courses closely related to their major disciplines. As a general rule, students are not allowed to take courses offered by their major department to fulfil GE requirement.

#### **(b) Exclusion courses**

Teaching units are requested to help identify courses with overlapping course content. Courses with more than one-third duplication in course content should be listed as exclusion courses. If there are differences in course level, the courses may be listed as one-way exclusion courses, i.e. students who have taken the lower level courses will be allowed to enroll in the higher level courses but not vice versa.

### **4. Teaching and Learning Activities:**

As one of the aims of University GE courses is to equip students with life-long learning capacities, teaching and learning activities should be designed to encourage students to do more reading, analytical thinking and writing. Tutorials and other interactive activities are desirable, the former are especially recommendable for large class to help students who do not have any background knowledge in a specific field.

Teaching units should ensure that teachers of large class do have adequate resource and support for conducting interactive learning activities.

### **5. Readings for Students:**

University GE courses should provide the same academic content and intellectual depth expected of other university courses bearing the same credits. It is not acceptable that students can get a pass just by attending lectures or reading only non-academic news articles or online resource. There should be adequate academic readings for University GE courses.

Instead of assigning an unrealistically long reading list, instructors should specify 1-2 key readings for each topic covered in the course syllabus. Some mechanism should be built into the course assessment to check that the assigned readings have been read. Some good practices are:

- (a) Give clear guidelines and build-in reading requirement in written assignment, e.g. to examine a specific issue and cite at least two references from the assigned reading list.
- (b) Set written assignment and examination questions related to the required readings.

### **6. Student Workload and Course Assessment:**

GE courses should carry the same workload in terms of reading and assignment as other university courses with the same number of units. It is desirable to incorporate mid-term assignment or other continuous assessment to assess learning progress and to complement final examination or term paper.

## **7. Team-taught Course:**

For courses jointly offered by a group of teachers, it is important to ensure that there exists a coherent and coordinated academic framework to connect the wide array of topics covered by different teachers. Coordination among the teachers to work out a coherent syllabus is indispensable, and it is necessary to have a course coordinator who can monitor the implementation quality. Pre-course and post-course meetings are necessary to ensure and review the standard and smooth delivery of the course.

## **III. Implementation and Course Delivery**

### **1. Teaching Language**

Teachers should adhere to the teaching language stipulated in the teaching timetable since students' course choice may depend on their preferred medium of instruction.

The Registry will not allow change in medium of instruction after course registration until the close of add/drop period, subject to a unanimous decision of the teacher and all students enrolled on the course by a secret ballot conducted after the deadline for adding courses.

### **2. Course Registration and Add/drop**

Course registration and add/drop should be performed by students on the Chinese University Student Information System (CUSIS). Add/drop after the stipulated period/outside CUSIS will not be considered unless there are compelling reasons. Please advise students to read the announcement of the Registration & Examinations Section (RES) on their website.

### **3. Course Assessment**

- (a) Assessment should be articulated with the desired learning outcomes. Teachers need to consider what and how the assessment tasks are able to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes.
- (b) Course assessment should not be conducted solely in response-type questions (e.g. multiple choice, true-or-false) or very short questions (those to be answered in a few words).
- (c) Marks should not be awarded for mere attendance but could be deducted for absence. If class participation is an assessment component, it should be effectively assessed and recorded.
- (d) As double-coded courses should be identical in all aspects and the credits earned are transferable between GE and departmental programmes, students of double-coded courses, whether registered under GE code or department code, should be assessed as one single class with the same assessment standard. Prevailing University assessment policies and guidelines, including those on grade distribution and percentages, should apply to the double-coded class combined rather than treating the classes each under GE code and department code separately.
- (e) All final examinations will be scheduled centrally by RES within the official examination period.

- (f) Course assessment should follow the University Course Assessment Guidelines for undergraduates and the average grade should be set at B. The Assessment Panel on GE supports criterion referencing and teachers may provide grading criteria/rubrics and output of students to justify exceptional student performance.
- (g) Course grades are subject to review and approval by the Assessment Panel on GE. Course grades should not be released until they are duly approved by the Assessment Panel.
- (h) Course grades should be submitted through CUSIS. Teachers may enquire about the grade submission deadlines on RES website.

#### **4. Policy on Honesty in Academic Work**

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students, and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating and plagiarism.

All written assignments should be submitted via VeriGuide, an online platform for similarity detection of assignments. The VeriGuide team can be reached by email: [veriguide@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:veriguide@cuhk.edu.hk) or by phone: 3163 4266.

If the course teacher judges that there is a plagiarism case after reading the Veriguide report, the teacher shall alert and give the student concerned access to the relevant portion of the report before the case is taken to any committee concerned. The matter shall not be handled by the teacher alone, since this will lead to inconsistent treatment. All incidence of suspected plagiarism in UGE courses should be reported to the Director of UGE for onward submission to the relevant Faculty Disciplinary Committee.

Please read the detailed policy at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. The guidelines recommend teachers to include a statement in their course outlines and to advise students to include a declaration in their written assignments.

#### **5. Policy on Viewing of Films and Movies**

Viewing of films should generally take place outside the class, with the exception of short fragments for immediate discussion in the class. For courses related to films and movies, course teachers should ensure that film copies are available in the Library and arrange for viewing sessions outside class time.

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