

**General Education in Hong Kong**  
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**Management of Curriculum Change and Faculty  
Development**

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# Preliminary Observations

## Definitions and importance of general education

- **No single or simple definition**
- **General education “is the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that all of us use during most of our lives—whether as parents, citizens, lovers, travelers, participants in the arts, leaders, volunteers, or good Samaritans.” -- heuristic definition by Joseph Katz that invites a conversation**
- **Specialization and general education are *both* important in a knowledge-based economy—but specialization usually predominates in the academy.**
- **Need a better balance--Labor economists and employers**
- **Hong Kong is preparing for a better balance**

# Managing the Process of Curriculum Change

## General Principles

- Importance of process
- Corporate responsibility
- Partnership among faculty, administration, students
- Based on agreement about student learning and shared educational principles

## Major steps in the process

1. Recognition of importance and need for general education
2. Organize the process for the “faculty as a whole”
3. Build credibility of the leadership group
4. Engage the faculty—and other constituencies
5. Develop philosophical framework—goals and principles
6. Design alternative curricula
7. Secure approval
8. Implement including:
  - Faculty staffing plan
  - Faculty and course development
  - Assessment plan
9. Pilot testing and revision

# Disciplinary Courses as General Education

- **Focused on non-major, who may take no more courses in the field**
- **Not:**
  - Popular, easy, “watered down,” or “gut course”**
  - Introduction but final course in the discipline**
  - Cover all sub-fields of a discipline but focus on few illustrative ones**
  - Can be focused on important theme/issue, eg. HIV/AIDS, environment**
- **But:**
  - Cultivate interest, engagement, highlight key ideas/perspectives**
  - Address skills, other goals in addition to content**
  - Make connections with other fields, “real world” issues**
- **These kinds of courses are new to faculty**
  - Faculty need support to develop these new kinds of courses**

# Other Types of General Education Courses

## High-Impact Courses– George Kuh

- Subject of much educational research
- Related to student engagement and learning
- Related to retention and graduation

## Types of courses

*First-year seminars*

*Common intellectual experiences*

*Learning communities*

*Writing-intensive courses*

*Collaborative assignments or projects*

*Undergraduate research*

*Diversity/global learning*

*Service learning*

*Internships*

*Culminating courses and projects*

**Faculty need support to develop new kinds of courses, and learn new content and new pedagogy, and work together to develop a consistent, coherent, goal-oriented “program”**

**Hamline University example:**

**Freshman seminars; writing, speaking, computing intensive courses**

# Examples of Actual Faculty Development Activities

## Activities:

- Summer seminars on various curricular topics
- Faculty conferences, retreats, workshops to plan and develop courses and materials
- Small grants, release time for specific preparation
- Workshops on teaching/learning approaches
- Travel to other institutions, curriculum conferences
- Visits by speakers, consultants, assessors, etc.
- Mentoring and peer coaching
- Experienced faculty orient new faculty to core course
- Weekly staff meetings of faculty teaching the course
- Conversations among professional & liberal arts faculty
- Assess/take stock of results of a pilot program

### Example of an interdisciplinary common course:

Faculty member named as “team leader”

Team planning for units, texts, assignments

Weekly staff meeting to discuss substance and pedagogy

Individuals attend conferences on pedagogy

Formative assessment designed

Assessment results discussed as a group

Institutional support provided for all of the above

# Institutional Support for Faculty/Course Development

**Effective faculty development for general education requires significant support from their institutions and their administrators:**

- **Funding for variety of activities**
- **Rhetorical support from top administrators, deans, department chairs—although remember “all politics is local”**
- **Meet with leadership group occasionally re. institutional strategy**
- **Leadership to “encourage” cooperation, as needed**
- **Provide institutional rewards, e.g., salary, tenure, promotion**
- **Protect careers, as needed—a “period of innovation”**
- **Anything else that may be needed to demonstrate institutional commitment to helping faculty make general education effective**

# Outcomes of Investment in Faculty Development

- **Reported Outcomes of Significant Faculty Development Program for General Education– Gaff survey of innovations**
- **More favorable attitudes toward general education among faculty and students**
- **Greater positive change in:**
  - Faculty renewal
  - Quality of student learning
  - Curricular coherence
  - Active learning among students
  - Institutional renewal
- **Greater institutional changes in:**
  - Faculty renewal
  - Institutional identity
  - Sense of community
  - Public relations
  - Efficient utilization of faculty
  - Admissions of student
- **General education can have even greater impact if it is a “signature” program for an institution**



# General Education as a Signature Program

- **Many institutions have such a program that is a defining feature of the institution**
  - Old-- University of Chicago, Columbia University
  - New-- Portland State University, Wagner College
- **Special qualities:**
  - Learning goals, their rationale, and the program understood by all constituencies
  - All elements of the institution supports program
  - Institution is known for the program
- **Curriculum driven institutional renewal:**
  - Hamline University example