

General Education Committee Report  
To the Senate Executive Committee  
February 8, 2017

In the Spring of 2016 the Senate XC sent a “query” to the General Education Committee that began:

To move forward, a General Education format at the College of Staten Island needs to be approved by the Faculty Senate, in accordance with governance.

Therefore, the Faculty Senate needs to consider a cohesive proposal brought forward from the General Education Committee. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee proposes that the Faculty Senate request that the General Education Committee formally re-adopt the Framework passed on October 5, 2012<sup>1</sup>, after contemplating changes/adjustments based on the report currently before the body. The revised framework shall be presented to the Faculty Senate at the May 2016 meeting.

The General Education Committee did present its reaffirmation of the October 2012 framework at that meeting along with an analysis of the differences between that GEC approved framework and the framework that made its way into the Chancellor’s report and the catalog. The XC also asked six further questions of the GEC, which answered three of the six questions and promised that the others, which required more research, would be addressed that fall. The sense of the Senate was that it would wait for a full report with answers to all the questions. So here we are.

Certainly the most important part of this response is the GEC’s reaffirmation of its 2012 framework, and its analysis of where the catalog version we are using went wrong. I quote:

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<sup>1</sup> The framework in question was actually passed on September 24, 2012 as per the minutes of that meeting. The date October 5, 2012, probably refers to the date the framework was communicated by the Provost to the College Community.

On May 9, 2016, the General Education Committee in principle reaffirmed the General Education Framework of October 5, 2012, which also had the following preamble approved on October 15, 2017:

“The General Education Committee believes that the Pathways initiative to change the general education requirements at the College undercuts the quality of education offered to undergraduates at CUNY and the letter and spirit of joint governance. This committee does not endorse Pathways. We are voting on the current resolution because Pathways, an inherently flawed plan, is being forced on the University by the CUNY Board. The CSI framework plan detailed in this General Education Committee's motion is an effort to contain the damage that Pathways will do to the general education of CSI students.”

The Entire GEC approved 2012 framework is attached as Appendix A, Framework Analysis.

As I just said, there were ways in which the catalog version of Pathways diverged from the version approved by the GEC. An analysis of these differences is attached as Appendix B. The analysis is rather lengthy, so I will read the executive summary.

“Since the approval of the pathways framework in 2012, its rapid implementation without oversight from faculty governance structures has produced three particularly concerning effects:

1. Sections of the catalog include contradictory information because of incorrectly designated courses. Most notably, the college option states all courses must be at the 200-level, yet many 100-level courses are listed.
2. For some majors, external limits on the number of credits to degree together with strict requirements in the majors have made it difficult for many students to complete all general education requirements, to complete the 200-level requirements in Pluralism & Diversity and Contemporary World in particular.
3. An unforeseen consequence in the transfer from Associates to Baccalaureate degree is that such students are required to take fewer credits at the (upper, 200-level) college option.

These three factors suggest a troubling “dumbing down” of general education particularly with regard to critical thinking and issues of difference, diversity and civic responsibility.”

In any case, the GEC has reaffirmed the Framework of 2012 and has presented, in its framework analysis and in the answers to the remaining six questions, the work that will have to be done by the GEC and by you to bring our general education program back into alignment with what the GEC approved in 2012.

I will turn to those questions:

**1. Core (Required & Flexible): List the courses deemed appropriate explicitly.**

The Committee continued its call for courses that should be designated for General Education.

Existing Courses in the catalog currently approved for the Required Core and the Flexible Core may be found in Appendix C. Catalog Courses approved for the College Option may be found in Appendix D. Courses approved by the General Education Committee but not forwarded to the Senate due to the Moratorium may be found in Appendix E.

**2. College Option: Formulate explicitly the role of:**

- a. 200 level courses: the GEC will correct the course list for the College Option by reaffirming the committee’s May 2015 decision that, with the exception of laboratory and language courses as outlined in the Framework, all courses in the College Option shall be at the 200-level.
- b. Laboratory Courses: Affirmed the long-standing practice in which a laboratory section is 1 credit, 2 hours.
- c. STEM substitutions: the STEM substitution allows students to replace a Social Science or TALA course with a STEM course. A subcommittee of the General Education Committee will move forward to:
  1. Gather data for June 2017 graduates with regard to STEM substitutions

2. Review and approve current list of STEM courses with regard to Social Science, TALA, Pluralism and Diversity, and Contemporary learning outcomes and total credits to graduation
  3. Solicit from Departments new STEM courses to be used for STEM substitutions in the College Option
3. **Re-evaluate General Education overlay requirements (Pluralism & Diversity and Contemporary World):**

The Committee voted to restore the original intent of the contemporary world and P&D requirements by reinstating language that had been removed from the catalog when the framework was inserted. This language described the nature of contemporary world and P&D courses, reaffirmed the commitment to Writing Across the Curriculum, and set categorical requirements for each: that P&D courses be at the 200-level or above with ENG 111 as a prerequisite; and that contemporary world courses be at the 200 level with ENG 151 as a prerequisite. The GEC confirmed that contemporary world courses would be taken in the College Option, but that, should appropriate (3-credit) 200-level P&D courses be developed and approved in the Flexible Core, the P&D requirement could be completed in the Flexible Core or in the College Option.

4. **Discuss 3 credit / 4 hour courses where appropriate.**

The justifications for current courses which have credit/hour differentials have been pedagogical and based on national policy and going forward this should continue to be the process. The committee also decided that the GEC was not the forum to make any arguments regarding courses' requirements and/or decisions based on financial reasons, but that the determination of credit/hour differential issues should be made by a faculty governance body.

## **5, Ensure faculty-based appeals of General Education Requirements**

A subcommittee of the General Education Committee has been established to handle student appeals of General Education Requirements. The new appeals process has been implemented.

## **6. Any other considerations the General Education Committee deems necessary:**

To remedy defects in the AA/AS/AAS requirements that allow Associate Degree Students transitioning to the Baccalaureate to bypass the Pluralism and Diversity and Contemporary World requirements, as well as the College Option Social Science and TALA requirements; the Committee urges that the General Education Committee and the Curriculum Committee revisit the Associate Degree requirements to address their inadequacy in meeting the standards expected of general education at CSI and in particular that the Associate Degrees explicitly include the pluralism and diversity (P&D) and the Contemporary World requirements.

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The Senate XC concluded its message to the GEC by stating that “Academic Departments during the time period the General Education Committee is evaluating the framework should prepare presentations of course proposals for general education not forwarded due to the “Moratorium”, in addition to listing existing courses in 2012 not appropriately credited to general education categories. The Faculty Senate then asks the General Education Committee to consider all the curriculum proposals from the Academic Departments on the basis of the above General Education Framework.”

In response, the GEC stated that it awaits guidance from the Senate before taking any action on matters that presuppose approval of the October 5, 2012 framework and voted unanimously, on February 7, 2017, “To accept the report [I have just summarized], and to forward it to the Faculty Senate as the completion of our answer to their request for information.”