

April 30, 2008

TO: Twin Cities Faculty, Academic Advising Staff, and Academic Administrators

FROM: Robert McMaster, Professor of Geography and Vice Provost and Dean, Undergraduate Education
Leslie Schiff, Professor of Microbiology and Chair, Council on Liberal Education

SUBJECT: Implementation of the New Liberal Education Requirements

The new requirements for liberal education, approved by the Faculty Senate on April 3, will go into place for students entering the university in fall, 2010.¹ At the end of summer term, 2010, all current certifications for liberal education will expire. This communication will provide an initial overview of the process for implementing these new requirements.

The Council on Liberal Education has attempted to provide significantly greater clarity about its intent in each of the new Core and Theme requirements, so that those who are proposing or reviewing courses have surer ground on which to base their development and assessment efforts. The new requirements are clearer and more rigorous, and place greater emphasis on helping students understand why we have liberal education and explicitly what educational benefits these requirements provide.

Like the current requirements, the new requirements have a matrix structure, with seven Core areas (Arts and Humanities, Biological Sciences, Historical Perspectives, Literature, Mathematical Thinking, Physical Sciences, and Social Sciences) and five Theme areas (Civic Life and Ethics, Diversity and Social Justice in the United States, the Environment, Global Perspectives, and Technology and Society). Technology and Society is a new Theme requirement; a reduction of one course in the core (from two social science courses to one), means that we will continue to have twelve distinct requirements.

Course Certification

The current “soft” moratorium on proposal of new LE courses is officially lifted as of May 1, 2008. Since the Council will not meet over the summer, courses submitted during the summer will be held for review in the fall. Any course submitted on or after May 1 must meet the new guidelines; courses that were submitted **with permission** under the soft moratorium (before May 1) using the old guidelines must be resubmitted and reviewed again under the new guidelines before January, 2010.

In order to make the review process more manageable for college curriculum committees and for the Council on Liberal Education, we have developed a submission schedule that will help review committees focus on a more limited range of topics. We ask that courses be submitted according to the following schedule; each broad subject area will have three possible submission

¹ The full text of “Renewing Our Commitment to Liberal Education,” the report of the Council on Liberal Education, can be found at <https://www.myu.umn.edu/public/cle.html>. A summary document comparing the old and new requirements is available at the same URL.

dates, with courses submitted according to their proposed Core area (for Core courses only, or Core plus Theme), or by their proposed Theme area (for Theme-only courses):

Core only or Core+Theme submitted by Core topic; Theme only submitted by Theme topic	Round 1 Submission Date	Round 2 Submission Date	Round 3 Submission Date
Core courses in Mathematical Thinking, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences (with or without any theme); Theme only courses in Environment, Technology and Society	October, 2008	February, 2009	October, 2009
Core courses in Historical Perspectives, Social Sciences (with or without any theme); Theme only courses in Global Perspectives, Diversity and Social Justice in the U.S.	November, 2008	March, 2009	November, 2009
Core courses in Arts and Humanities, Literature (with or without any theme); Theme only courses in Civic Life and Ethics	December, 2008	April, 2009	December, 2009

Courses may be submitted for review throughout the month during any of the three rounds noted above; courses submitted after the month indicated will be held for the next round of review. A final round of review in spring 2010 will be limited to resubmissions of courses formerly submitted and returned for revision. All course proposals initially submitted by December 2009 will be reviewed and acted on before spring 2010 registration and summer orientation and registration. During the review, course capacity in each requirement will be closely monitored to assure sufficient available seats to allow students to meet requirements.

Important points to remember when developing courses under the new criteria:

- Core courses must help students understand what liberal education is, how the content and the substance of this course enhance a liberal education, and what this means for them as students and as citizens.
- Core courses must employ teaching and learning strategies that engage students with **doing** the work of the field, not just reading about it.
- A course may be approved to meet one core or one theme or both a core and a theme. In the latter case, the theme must be **fully and meaningfully integrated** into the course (the old standard of “one-third of the course” will no longer be sufficient).
- Courses will no longer be approved to meet two themes; although the course subject matter may touch on more than one theme, proposers must choose the theme for which they request certification.
- Courses may continue to be submitted for both LE and WI designation, though the WI review will now be handled by the Campus Writing Board. Reviews by both bodies will be coordinated as much as possible to assure timely responses.
- We will continue the current policy that courses in the Physical and Biological Science Cores must be four credits each because of the lab requirements; courses in all other Cores and Themes must be at least three credits.

- Both the old and the new requirements for the Core stated that Core courses should be taught by regular faculty. The Council remains convinced that because liberal education is central to the teaching mission of the University it should be largely carried out by tenured and tenure-track faculty. Exceptions may be made in extraordinary circumstances.
- The Council endorses another current LE provision requiring that core courses include “small group experiences.” The Council does not define the nature or size of these groups; labs or discussion sections might be examples, but so would project work groups, online discussions, group presentations, or other kinds of learning. The goal is to support active and engaged learning rather than passive acceptance of information.
- The Council’s expectation is that, as much as possible, Core courses will not have prerequisites. (The same is *not* true for Theme courses.) The reason for this is simple: in most cases, the prerequisite course(s) will have already met the Core requirement. For example, there might be a number of excellent computer science courses that would meet the Mathematical Thinking requirement, but most of those courses require completion of another math course (calculus or college algebra) that would already have met the requirement.

Student Issues

As was the case when the current liberal education requirements went into effect, and again when the University converted from quarters to semesters, students will be accommodated as generously as possible during the change to new requirements. Students who matriculated at the University before fall 2010 will be under the old requirements; courses certified under the new requirements will be applicable to the old requirements for these students. Students may switch to the new requirements if they wish; this change will need to be noted as an exception on the student’s APAS report. Appeals will continue to be handled as at present. Transfer students will continue to be accommodated as at present; the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum will still meet all but the new Technology and Society Theme, which can be completed after students transfer to the Twin Cities campus. Some Advanced Placement (AP) courses will probably continue to meet liberal education requirements. The Council will review AP courses in relation to the new liberal education requirements in fall 2008.

Next Steps

Within the next month, colleges will receive more explicit information on proposing courses under the new CLE guidelines. During fall semester, the Council will also develop guidelines for the proposed “liberal education minor” designation, and for the pilot program (to be offered through the University Honors Program) that will allow students to individualize their liberal education requirements.

If you have questions about the guidelines or about the implementation process, please contact Laurel Carroll at l-carr@umn.edu or Linda Ellinger at ellin001@umn.edu. They will be able to answer your question, or will direct it to the Council for a response.