

**SIR SANDFORD FLEMING COLLEGE
POLICY MANUAL**

POLICY NUMBER: 2-212	APPROVED BY: Board of Governors
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SUBJECT: GENERAL EDUCATION	

POLICY STATEMENT

The core business of Fleming College is the delivery of programs of instruction leading to an academic credential. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) Credentials Framework (effective July 31, 2009) has mandated that every college shall offer, in addition to vocational and essential employability skills outcomes, a program of General Education designed to foster the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity, and richness of the human experience; and who, as a result of this consciousness, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the societies in which they live and work.

In keeping with the spirit of the MTCU policy directive, Fleming College is committed to providing dynamic learning opportunities that reflect the breadth and complexity of contemporary experience, and that enable students to meet the challenges they face in their personal, community, family, and working lives. General Education curriculum, aligned with vocational and essential employability skills learning, will engage students in a process of inquiry that promotes diversity, flexibility, global awareness, critical thinking, informed citizenship, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

POLICY SCOPE

Fleming's General Education Policy outlines specific requirements for the following

- Ontario College Certificate
- Ontario College Diploma
- Ontario College Advanced Diploma
- Applied Degrees in compliance with the Post-Secondary Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB)

POLICY STANDARD

In keeping with the MTCU mandate, between 3-5 General Education courses must be present in all programs leading to either the Ontario College Diploma, or Advanced Diploma. At least one (1) must be purely elective (as defined in "Definition of General Education Courses"). For one-year Ontario College Certificate programs, at least one (1) General Education course must be included, with discretion to each School regarding whether that course is mandatory or elective,

GENERAL EDUCATION POLICY STANDARD BY CREDENTIAL

Ontario College Certificate (OCC)

Section 1.3 of the MTCU Binding Directive states, “[i]t is desirable that graduates at this level will have been engaged in learning that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study, especially in programs of instruction intended to lead to further postsecondary study in a related field.” To meet this requirement, each OCC program will contain at least one (1) General Education course. This course may be either mandatory or elective, at the discretion of each School.

Ontario College Diploma (OCD)

Students must take between 3-5 General Education courses, at least one (1) of which must be elective (as defined in “Definition of General Education Courses”).

Ontario College Advanced Diploma (OCAD)

Students must take between 3-5 General Education courses, at least one (1) of which must be elective (as defined in “Definition of General Education Courses”).

Ontario College Graduate Certificate (OCGC)

General Education credits are not required in Graduate Certificate programs as students enter these programs with prior credentials.

Applied Degree

At the applied degree level, compliance with QAB includes the following:

At least 20% and no more than 30% of an applied degree program's hours in degree level courses outside the professional or main field of study, of which some are free-electives (no less than 15% in degree level courses in the humanities, social sciences and sciences unrelated to the main field of study). (For specific details, refer to PEQAB's “Guidelines and Procedures for Quality Assessment Review of Applied Degree Programs”.)

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Definition of General Education Courses

“General Education course” means a course that meets the General Education curriculum requirement as described in the section “Policy Standard.” Both mandatory and elective General Education courses fall within the descriptor “General Education course.” Consistent with article 1.3 of the MTCU Credentials Framework, Fleming College is committed to offering General Education courses that

- 1) expose graduates to at least one discipline outside their vocational field of study;
- 2) are offered and designed discretely from vocational courses;
- 3) have learning outcomes consistent with at least one of the General Education themes, as set down in Appendix C1 of the Binding Directive (Appendix A of this document);
- 4) strengthen students' generic skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and/or social importance;
- 5) emphasize theoretical and conceptual understanding rather than applied skills.

There are three key tests for assessing the status of mandatory General Education courses:

- 1) *Does the course provide a broad theoretical overview of some area of generally significant knowledge, as captured under at least one of the five General Education themes, with little or no applications training?*
- 2) *Does the course present a topic with broad-based personal and/or social importance?*
- 3) *Is at least 70% of the curriculum general in nature? In other words, is at least 70% of the curriculum not specifically vocational, such that it could appear in a standalone elective General Education course?*

Mandatory versus Elective General Education Courses

Elective General Education courses are designed and offered as standalone General Education courses (as defined in “Definition of General Education Courses”). These courses are subject to the same tests of theoretical breadth and broad-based social importance as mandatory courses; the difference is that these courses are free electives over which students exercise choice.

Mandatory General Education courses are designed and offered as required General Education courses not subject to student choice. These courses must meet the same General Education standard for theoretical emphasis, as described above and in the Binding Directive, but differ from elective courses in that they are not required to be “outside [the] vocational field of study.”

BALANCE OF MANDATORY AND ELECTIVE GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

Electivity is foundational to the MTCU Binding Directive on General Education and is a vital component of Fleming’s commitment to student learning.

Elective General Education courses ensure compliance with Binding Directive stipulations that General Education should include “elective processes” and provide learning opportunities “beyond the vocational field of study.” To be compliant, all programs of study leading to an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma must include at least one elective General Education course. This elective must not be prescribed by program or school, and must be freely selected by students from among standalone elective courses made available from a common pool offered and administered by the School of General Arts & Sciences. Although student choice from among elective offerings must remain unencumbered, elective offerings may be managed in order to prevent the overlap of vocational areas and General Education electives with closely related content.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Dean – GAS is responsible and accountable for the approval of General Education curriculum according to "General Education in Ontario's Community Colleges: Guidebook for Creating and Revising Course Outlines."

The Dean – GAS is responsible and accountable for administering General Education courses, both mandatory and elective.

The Dean – GAS is responsible and accountable for all processes related to the operationalization of the General Education Policy, including

- Ensuring quality of course curricula;
- Approving courses, course content on a three year cycle
- Soliciting and approving proposals for new General Education courses;

- Redesigning, retiring, or redeploying General Education courses as needed in order to ensure breadth, quality, relevance, compliance with the General Education policy, and/or in accordance with strategic School and/or College priorities and/or initiatives;
- Maintaining the General Education pool of courses, both in total and on a per-semester basis;
- Communicating with the General Education committee regarding significant changes to the Policy;
- Communicating with the Deans' group regarding changes to and implementation of the General Education policy.

The Vice-President Academic is responsible and accountable for the implementation of the General Education Policy for the college.

Deans are responsible and accountable for ensuring that General Education requirements are met in all new and continuing programs covered by the General Education Policy.

Deans are responsible and accountable for implementation of the General Education Policy for their Schools

The **Academic Planning & Development Committee (APDC)** play a key role in the monitoring and adherence of programs to college policy and is responsible for the approval of new programs.

General Education Advisory Committee – Terms of Reference

Membership: The General Education Committee will consist of representatives from every School, in addition to the Vice-President Academic (ex officio), the Dean of the School of General Arts and Sciences (who shall be chair of the committee), a representative from the Centre for Learning and Teaching, and the General Education Coordinator.

Responsibilities: The General Education Committee will advise the Dean of GAS in matters related to the administration and implementation of the General Education Policy. The Committee has the responsibility for course approval on a three year cycle. Committee members will also assist in the communication of the Policy to their respective schools, but are not directly responsible or accountable for implementation of the policy. A critical component of the Committee's duties is to advise and offer recommendations to the Dean of GAS in situations where changes to the policy are being considered.

Meetings: The General Education Committee will meet at least once per semester. Minutes from meetings will be posted with those of the Academic Leaders Team.

Appendix A – Approved General Education Themes

APPROVED GENERAL EDUCATION THEMES (FROM MTCU GUIDELINES)

The following themes will be used in the development and identification of courses that are designed to fulfil the General Education requirement for programs of instructions:

1. Arts in Society
2. Civic Life
3. Social and Cultural Understanding
4. Personal Understanding
5. Science and Technology

Arts in Society

Rationale: The capacity of a person to recognize and evaluate artistic and creative achievements is useful in many aspects of his/her life. Since artistic expression is a fundamentally human activity, which both reflects and anticipates developments in the larger culture, its study will enhance the student's cultural and self-awareness.

Content: Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, of the artist's and writer's perceptions of the world and the means by which those perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. They will also provide an appreciation of the aesthetic values used in examining works of art and possibly, a direct experience in expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

Civic Life

Rationale: In order for individuals to live responsibly and to reach their potential as individuals and as citizens of society, they need to understand the patterns of human relationships that underlie the orderly interactions of a society's various structural units. Informed people will have knowledge of the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national, and global level, and an awareness of international issues and the effects of these on Canada, and Canada's place in the international community.

Content: Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the meaning of freedoms, rights, and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in Canada and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.

Social and Cultural Understanding

Rationale: Knowledge of the patterns and precedents of the past provide the means for a person to gain an awareness of his or her place in contemporary culture and society. In addition to this awareness, students will acquire a sense of the main currents of their culture and that of other cultures over an extended period of time in order to link personal history to the broader study of culture.

Content: Courses in this area are those that 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 the students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic, or linguistic characteristics.

Personal Understanding

Rationale: Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities. They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and vocationally.

Content: Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity 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.

Science and Technology

Rationale: Matter and energy are universal concepts in science, forming a basis for understanding the interactions that occur in living and non-living systems in our universe. Study in this area provides an understanding of the behaviour of matter that provides a foundation for further scientific study and the creation of broader understanding about natural phenomena.

Similarly, the various applications and developments in the area of technology have an increasing impact on all aspects of human endeavour and have numerous social, economic, and philosophical implications. For example, the operation of computers to process data at high speed has invoked an interaction between machines and the human mind that is unique in human history. This development and other technological developments have a powerful impact on how we deal with many of the complex questions in our society.

Content: Courses in this area should stress scientific inquiry and deal with basic or fundamental questions of science rather than applied ones. 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, should be offered in a non-applied manner to provide students with an opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices on their lives.

Portions of this policy have been adapted from the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities' Framework for Programs of Instruction, revised April 1, 2005; and from the General Education policies of Algonquin College and Fanshawe College.