

FAQs Regarding Proposed Revisions to SBHE Policy 403.7: Common General Education Requirement and Transfer of General Education Credits (a.k.a. GERTA)

Recommendations by the ND General Education Council, approved unanimously by that group.

1. What is the ND General Education Council (NDGEC)?

The NDGEC is a grass-roots advisory group with representatives from all NDUS institutions, as well as the private and tribal colleges, who meet to share best practices and discuss ways to support general education in the state. Members are faculty, staff, and administrators. The group's constitution is at: <http://www.ndus.edu/uploads/resources/2515/constitution-of-the-nd-general-education-council.pdf>

2. What is the goal of this proposed revision?

The goal is to allow a pilot program in which an NDUS institution can develop an approved alternative general education program "providing it includes all of the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes approved by the North Dakota General Education Council [written communication, oral communication, quantitative literacy, critical & creative thinking, and breadth of knowledge] and it totals at least 36 semester credits."

- The revision allows the general education of an NDUS campus to focus on what students actually learned, not just on what courses they took.
- Our regional accreditor (the Higher Learning Commission) and our various specialized accreditors (ABET, AACSB, NCATE, etc.) similarly ask us to provide evidence of what our student learn, not just the courses they take.

3. Does this proposal change the current GERTA policy?

No and yes. The proposal maintains the current policy's strength: students continue to enjoy smooth and seamless transfer of GE coursework from one NDUS institution to another. What the new policy adds is the possibility for change in general education, with an outcomes focus. Further, no NDUS institution will be required to revise its general education.

4. How else is the proposed revision different?

The proposal allows an individual campus to conduct a pilot GE program as long as it does not reduce transferring efficiency and as long as it aims toward the GE learning outcomes that all our campuses have agreed to (and which are based on the LEAP ELOs). This will allow campuses greater room to revise and improve their GE programs--something that is taking place all around the U.S. and encouraged by accrediting agencies.

5. What are the essential learning outcomes for GE that built into the proposed policy (and which the NDGEC approved)?

They are: written communication, oral communication, quantitative literacy, critical & creative thinking, and breadth of knowledge.

6. What are some of issues in the current policy that the revision addresses?

There two main issues. One is the present General Education Areas in SBHE 403.7 restrict innovation and allow limited institutional autonomy. Second, the current policy focus is on traditional disciplinary categories rather than broader learning outcomes.

7. What is procedure for an action like this? How does a proposal from the NDGEC move forward?

The NDGEC Constitution stipulates that its actions go to the Academic Affairs Council for their approval. If approved at AAC, the action would go to NDUS Cabinet, the NDUS Chancellor, and then finally to the Board (SBHE) for final approval. At this time, the GERTA revision proposal has been approved by the NDGEC and the faculty senates of each institution.