

Idaho State Board of Education

GOVERNING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SECTION: III. POSTSECONDARY AFFAIRS

SUBSECTION: N. Statewide General Education

August 2026

In our rapidly-changing world, students need to understand how knowledge is generated and created. They need to adapt to new opportunities as they arise as well as effectively communicate and collaborate with increasingly diverse communities and ways of knowing. In combination with major coursework, general education curriculum prepares students to use multiple strategies in an integrative manner to explore, critically analyze, and creatively address real-world issues and challenges. General education coursework provides students with an understanding of self, the physical world, and human society—its cultural and artistic endeavors as well as an understanding of the methodologies, value systems, and thought processes employed in human inquiries. General education helps instill students with the personal and civic responsibilities of good citizenship, and prepares them to be adaptive, life-long learners.

This policy applies to the University of Idaho, Boise State University, Idaho State University, Lewis-Clark State College, College of Eastern Idaho, College of Southern Idaho, College of Western Idaho, and North Idaho College (hereinafter “institutions”).

1. The state of Idaho’s general education framework for Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Baccalaureate degrees, must include the following:
 - a. Thirty-one (31) credits or more of the general education curricula must fit within the General Education Matriculation (GEM) competency areas defined in subsection 4 of this policy, and
 - b. Five (5) or more credits of the general education curricula, which are reserved for institutions to address the specific mission and goals of the institution. For this purpose, institutions may create new competency areas or they may choose to count additional credits from GEM competencies. Regardless, these institutionally designated credits must have learning outcomes linked to Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Essential Learning Outcomes.
2. The intent of the general education framework is to:
 - a. Establish statewide competencies that guide institutions’ determination of courses that will be designated as GEM courses,
 - b. Establish shared disciplinary/Ways of Knowing rubrics that guide institutional decision-making about designating courses to GEM competency areas, and
 - c. Create a transparent and seamless transfer experience for undergraduate students.
3. There are six (6) GEM competency areas. The first two (2) emphasize integrative skills intended to inform the learning process throughout general education and

major. The final four (4) represent ways of knowing and are intended to expose students to ideas and engage them in a broad range of active learning experiences.

The GEM competency areas are as listed:

- a. Written Communication
- b. Oral Communication
- c. Mathematical Ways of Knowing
- d. Scientific Ways of Knowing
- e. Humanistic and Artistic Ways of Knowing
- f. Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing

4. GEM courses in each area must include the following competencies:

a. Written Communication

Upon completion of a course in this category, students are able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- i. Use flexible writing process strategies to generate, develop, revise, proofread, and edit texts.
- ii. Adopt strategies and genre appropriate to the rhetorical situation.
- iii. Use inquiry-based strategies to conduct research that explores multiple and diverse ideas and perspectives, appropriate to the rhetorical context.
- iv. Use rhetorically appropriate strategies to evaluate, represent, and respond to the ideas and research of others.
- v. Address readers' biases and assumptions with well-developed evidence-based reasoning.
- vi. Use appropriate conventions for integrating, citing, and documenting source material.
- vii. Read, interpret, and communicate key concepts in writing and rhetoric.

b. Oral Communication

Upon completion of a course in this category, students are able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- i. Research, discover, and develop information resources and structure spoken messages to increase knowledge and understanding.
- ii. Research, discover, and develop evidence-based reasoning and persuasive appeals for ethically influencing attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.
- iii. Adapt spoken messages to the diverse personal, ideological, and emotional needs of individuals, groups, or contexts.
- iv. Employ effective spoken and nonverbal behaviors that support communication goals and illustrate self-efficacy.
- v. Listen in order to effectively and critically evaluate the reasoning, evidence, and communication strategies of self and others.

- vi. Demonstrate knowledge of key theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts in the Communication discipline, as applied to oral communication.
- c. Mathematical Ways of Knowing
- Upon completion of a course in this category, a student is able to demonstrate the following competencies:
- i. Interpret mathematical concepts.
 - ii. Represent information/data.
 - iii. Use appropriate strategies/procedures when solving mathematical problems.
 - iv. Draw reasonable conclusions based on quantitative information.
- d. Scientific Ways of Knowing
- Upon completion of a non-lab course in this category, a student is able to demonstrate competencies i-iv. A student is able to demonstrate all five competencies, i-v, upon completion of a lab course.
- i. Apply foundational knowledge and models of a discipline in the physical or natural sciences to analyze and/or predict phenomena.
 - ii. Apply scientific reasoning to critically evaluate assertions.
 - iii. Interpret and communicate scientific information via written, spoken and/or visual representations.
 - iv. Describe the relevance of specific scientific principles to the human experience.
 - v. Test a hypothesis in the laboratory or field using discipline-specific tools and techniques for observation, data collection and analysis to form a defensible conclusion.
- e. Humanistic and Artistic Ways of Knowing
- Upon completion of a course in this category, students are able to demonstrate at least five (5) of the following competencies:
- i. Recognize and describe humanistic, historical, or artistic works within problems and patterns of the human experience.
 - ii. Distinguish and apply methodologies, approaches, or traditions specific to the discipline.
 - iii. Differentiate formal, conceptual, and technical elements specific to the discipline.
 - iv. Analyze, evaluate, and interpret texts, objects, events, or ideas in their cultural, intellectual or historical contexts.
 - v. Interpret artistic or humanistic works through the creation of art, language, or performance.
 - vi. Develop critical perspectives or arguments about the subject matter, grounded in evidence-based analysis.
 - vii. Demonstrate self-reflection, widened perspective, and respect for diverse viewpoints.

f. Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing

Upon completion of a course in this category, students are able to demonstrate all five (5) of the following competencies.

- i. Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of a particular Social Science discipline.
- ii. Describe self and the world by examining the dynamic interaction of individuals, groups, and societies as they shape and are shaped by history, culture, institutions, and ideas.
- iii. Utilize Social Science approaches, such as research methods, inquiry, or problem-solving, to examine the variety of perspectives about human experiences.
- iv. Evaluate how reasoning, history, or culture informs and guides individual, civic, or global decisions.
- v. Identify the impact of the similarities and differences among and between individuals, cultures, or societies across space and time.

5. General Education Requirements

- a. This subsection applies to Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Baccalaureate degrees. For the purpose of this policy, disciplines are indicated by course prefixes.

General education curricula must reflect the following credit distribution:

Competency Area	Minimum Credits
Written Communication	6
Oral Communication	3
Mathematical Ways of Knowing	3
Scientific Ways of Knowing	7 (from two different disciplines with at least one laboratory or field experience)
Humanistic and Artistic Ways of Knowing	6 (from two different disciplines)
Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing	6 (from two different disciplines)
Institutionally-Designated Credits	5

- i. GEM courses are designed to be broadly accessible to students regardless of major, thus college-level and non-GEM pre-requisites to GEM courses should be avoided unless deemed necessary by the institution.
 - ii. Additional GEM courses, beyond the general education curricula, may be required within the major for degree completion.
- b. In rare instances, a specialized associate degree program might better serve students by distributing general education requirements differently than those listed above. Proposals for such programs must be submitted to the Board office

for review and approval on a case-by-case basis. Proposals must describe the demonstrable benefits that the alternative general education distribution will have for transfer students, the institutions' plans for additional advising, and any other information that will demonstrate how students will not be harmed by this alternative structure.

- c. This subsection pertains to Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees.

The general education curricula for the AAS degree must contain a minimum of fifteen (15) credits, so distributed in the following areas:

Competency Area	Minimum Credits
Written Communication	3
Oral Communication	3
Mathematical Ways of Knowing	3
Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing	3
Any general education course including institutionally-designated courses	3

- d. GEM courses and institutionally-designated courses must transfer as meeting an associated general education competency requirement at any institution pursuant to Board policy Section III.V.

6. Governance of the General Education Program and Review of Courses

- a. GEM courses are developed by faculty and approved via the curriculum approval process of the institution delivering the courses. Faculty discipline groups representing all institutions must meet at least annually or as directed by the Board, to ensure consistency and relevance of general education competencies and courses approved for their respective GEM competency areas.
- b. Common Course Indexing is developed for courses offered within the GEM framework to provide greater transparency and seamlessness within transfer processes at Idaho's postsecondary institutions. Common-indexed courses are accepted as direct equivalents across institutions for transfer purposes. Common course indexing must include common course prefix, common course number, common course title, and common GEM discipline area designation. The common course number must be three digits in sequence, but can be preceded by a single digit if four numbers are utilized by the institution (x####).

The common course list must be approved by the Board on an annual basis and must be maintained by the Board office. Changes to the list may be proposed by faculty discipline groups to the General Education Committee. Proposed additions or removal of courses on the common course list must be reviewed by the General Education Committee prior to Board approval. The request to remove a common-indexed course from an institution's academic catalog must be approved by the

Board. The request to discontinue a course must be submitted in writing by the institution to the Board office. The request shall be submitted no less than a year in advance and provide rationale for the inability to offer the course.

- c. The General Education Committee must consist of Board-appointed representatives from each of the institutions (Institutional Representatives) as well as Subject Representatives from each of the following stakeholder groups: Technical College Leadership Council (TCLC) as designated by the Division of Career and Technical Education; the Idaho Registrars Council; the Idaho Dual Credit Coordinators; the Open Practitioner, Advocate, and Leader (OPAL) community; the center for teaching and learning (CTL) community; a community of emerging pedagogical importance (e.g., artificial intelligence); and the Executive Director of the Board, or designee, who must serve as the chair of the committee. Institutional Representatives are generally the directors or deans of general education (or equivalent). Upon Board approval, appointments for Institutional Representatives will be for the duration of the representative's term as general education director. Subject Representative terms are for three years, commencing on July 1st. If Subject Representatives are amenable to continuing, they are affirmed by their respective groups prior to their term's end. To ensure alignment with AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes and subsection 1, the Committee must meet at least annually to review the competencies and rubrics of the general education framework. The Committee must make recommendations to the Board regarding the general education framework and the common course list. The Committee must review and make recommendations on the general education competencies as necessary. GEM Committee duties are prescribed by the Board, including those that may involve addressing issues related to competency areas and course offerings. The GEM Committee reports to the Council on Academic Affairs and Programs.
- d. The institutions must identify all general education courses in their curricula and identify them in a manner that is easily accessible by the public via their respective websites, as well as relevant web resources maintained by the Board office.