

Current Guidance for GE Designations

General Guidance

The GEEC Curriculum Sub-Committee uses as a guide the GE designation descriptions found in the [GE section of the current catalog](#). Each designation also lists the GE program learning outcomes (PLOs) that it maps to and those PLOs provide additional detail that may be helpful to proposers. GE PLOs may be found here: <https://ge.ucmerced.edu/faculty-resources/plos>. A link to these descriptions may also be found within the GE section of the Curriculog course proposal form. Courses proposed for GE designations should demonstrate either in their Curriculog description and/or attached syllabus specifically 1) how the course will provide students the described GE learning experience and 2) the opportunities (assignments) they will have to demonstrate their learning. Sufficient details should be given to allow the committee to evaluate if the relevant GE learning outcome is being substantively addressed and how it will be assessed.

For example, the Crossroads GE designation is described as “Like the Spark Seminar, the Crossroads course will focus on a specific topic but from an interdisciplinary perspective. It emphasizes different, yet complementary, disciplinary approaches, methods, and assumptions, and provides students with an opportunity for research and analysis. PLO1, PLO2, PLO3, PLO4.” The committee in its review will look for demonstration of the interdisciplinary aspects of the course (specific disciplines mentioned, lecture topics, readings, etc.), as well as the specific opportunities students have for research and analysis (types of learning activities and related assignments).

The committee also looks at the Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) to see that they align with the requested GE designations. A course with GE designations related to writing, for example, should list written communication in the CLOs. While course topics and assignments may change with instructors and time, the CLOs should be relatively constant and help to ensure that the course continues to meet the requirements of the GE designation.

Guidance for Specific GE Designations

Spark Seminar

This designation is currently fulfilled by Spark 001 and Spark 010. Guidance for proposing a Spark seminar may be found here: <https://ge.ucmerced.edu/faculty-resources/faculty-resources/teaching-spark-seminar>.

Written Communication

This designation is currently only met through the WRI 10 foundational writing class.

Quantitative Reasoning

This designation is currently met through a limited number of foundational quantitative reasoning classes in various disciplines.

Language

This refers to foreign or computing languages and is usually satisfied in high school by students. UC Merced classes satisfying this requirement correlate to at least the second semester of a foreign language or specific foundational computing language courses.

Crossroads

Described above. This is met by courses proposed by various disciplines. Please note that the Spark seminar, Crossroads and Culminating Experience are integrative components that appear at the beginning, midpoint and end of the GE curriculum. Proposers are encouraged to request either the Crossroads or Culminating Experience for the same class, but not both, since the former corresponds to intermediate learning expectations and the latter to advanced learning expectations.

Writing in the Discipline

With respect to the Writing in the Discipline (WID) GE designation, it is described as “This upper division requirement can be satisfied either with a designated writing course or a writing-intensive course in the major. The focus is on how to write for a particular field. A one-credit lab course attached to another course may also satisfy this requirement if the primary focus of the lab is writing. PLO3.” The GEEC Curriculum Sub-Committee has developed a set of working guidelines for WID based on what it has found at other institutions, described below. Not all are required to be met, but at least some of them should be addressed to distinguish the proposed course as particularly providing opportunities for students to learn about writing in the discipline.

Guidance for WID designation:

- 1) We want to see that there is writing that is at least going through summative assessment, and we would like to see formative assessment of the writing as well.
- 2) The writing that the students are doing should be similar to what they would be doing as a professional in the discipline.
- 3) The writing should make up a sizable portion of the course grade.
- 4) The students should be pointed in the direction of resources (for example, many professional societies have style guides for writing), and it’s even better if they use the resources in the class.
- 5) We like to see some class time devoted to teaching professional standards and how a particular discipline will approach writing and communication.

Culminating Experience

This should take place in an advanced course, since it is an opportunity for students to demonstrate the totality of their learning. The GE program approved by the Senate faculty describes this GE designation as addressing GE PLOs 1-5, so this should be supported as described above in the designation request. In most cases, disciplinary PLOs align closely to GE PLOs, so both can be addressed, and this is often described as the ideal culminating experience.

Intellectual Experiences

The GE PLOs listed for each Intellectual Experience can provide additional details as to how these designations might be supported in a GE designation request. The GEEC encourages proposers to limit requests to four Intellectual Experience per course to help ensure substantive engagement with each topic to avoid attenuation of GE program learning goals. Note that students can only receive credit for two Intellectual Experiences for any one course, in any case. Additional guidance for some Intellectual Experiences for which proposers have requested clarification appears below.

Specific Guidance on Select Intellectual Experiences

Scientific Method: Learn how the scientific method leads to new knowledge about the natural world by correcting and integrating previous knowledge using empirical evidence. PLO1, PLO2

Please note that this designation refers to the scientific method of observation, formulating and testing of a hypothesis, and refinement of that hypothesis. Some proposers request this designation based on using scientific methodologies (techniques, equipment, etc.) and the designation is usually not approved in that case.