

## **Queens College Pathways Implementation Plan**

### **February 6, 2012 Draft**

This is a working draft of the Queens College implementation plan for the CUNY General Education (GenEd) Pathways initiative. It is necessarily incomplete because fundamental issues remain about the Board of Trustees Pathways resolution and the Pathways Steering Committee report of December 1, 2011.

#### **1. Plan Outline**

In a letter to college presidents dated December 13, 2011, Vice Chancellor Logue listed eight items that need to be addressed in each college's implementation plan. We list those eight items here, along with statements of how the Queens College implementation plan addresses each one

##### **A. Review of existing courses for possible inclusion in the Common Core.**

In April 2006, the Queens College Academic Senate adopted a new structure for General Education at the College, called "Perspectives on the Liberal Arts and Sciences." Although the acronym "PLAS" is often used as a shorthand way to refer to this curricular structure, it is the first full word "Perspectives," that captures the essence and strength of the curriculum.

Although students see the program as a complicated set of distributional requirements, much thought went in to making sure that all Perspectives courses are integrative rather than simply a disparate set of checkboxes to be disposed of as efficiently as possible. All Perspectives courses must meet three criteria: "a) address how, in the discipline (or disciplines) of the course, data and evidence are construed and knowledge acquired; that is, how questions are asked and answered; b) position the discipline(s) in the liberal arts curriculum and the larger society; and c) address ... goals ... appropriate for their subject matter."

The Senate Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) formed a subcommittee, called the General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) to review proposals from departments for courses that would satisfy the various Perspectives requirements. To date, GEAC has reviewed over 200 courses, and we now have an "inventory" of approved Perspectives courses sufficient to meet our students' needs for degree completion.

There is no way to map Perspectives "areas" and "contexts" to the Pathways Common Core areas. Rather, the UCC will build on the experience of GEAC to identify where mappings might be possible and to clarify what changes to course syllabi need to be made so that each satisfies the proper set of learning objectives.

**B. Reformulation of courses to meet the credit requirements and/or learning outcomes specified in the Common Core framework, and/or development of new courses, as needed.**

As indicated above, one part of our plan is to determine which Perspectives courses can be reformulated to fit the Pathways Common Core structure. UCC, through GEAC or an equivalent subcommittee, will conduct the review process of our existing inventory and make recommendations back to the departments for revising existing Perspectives courses to make them compatible with Pathways. An unknown percentage of our Perspectives inventory will be lost in this process because Perspectives courses can satisfy multiple requirements, whereas each Pathways course is allowed to satisfy only one requirement.

The second part of this document describes the reformulation effort from the point of view of the Pathways Common Core, and raises issues that will need to be addressed in that effort.

In addition to reviewing Perspectives courses, the college will be developing a new set of courses specifically designed to provide a coherent framework for General Education at Queens. These new courses will continue the strong tradition established by the Perspectives initiative, but will specifically address ways in which multiple disciplines can bring their seemingly-diverse perspectives to bear on the Life and Physical Sciences Required Core area and to each of the Flexible Common Core areas. Although temporal and resource constraints preclude achieving everything we hope for with these new courses, the working model does remain: to replace discipline-centric courses with courses that bring a variety of disciplines' perspectives to bear on their topics.

**C. Assurance that the college is submitting, for each area within the Common Core, a minimum of one course that has no prerequisites, and, as appropriate, courses within each area that will address students' instructional needs, whether a student is placed at introductory, intermediate, or advanced levels on entry to the college.**

There are issues with this part of the plan that we may not be able to address here. Much more important than the number of courses within each area are issues of resources: number of sections and sizes of sections. Furthermore, except for mathematics and foreign language, "placement" does not affect our implementation. The placement issues, and how we plan to address them, are described in the second part of this document.

The current Perspectives inventory at Queens already consists almost entirely of courses with no prerequisites except for basic competency in writing and numeracy. Also, no Perspectives course has another Perspectives course as a prerequisite.

**D. Identification of placement strategies to be used, as appropriate.**

The current Compass exam allows us to evaluate the appropriate level Mathematics course for students, and we will continue to use this tool. See the second section of this document for details.

We currently evaluate foreign language placement using a mix of high school Regents exam scores, Advanced Placement exam scores, course transfers from other colleges, departmental exams, and personal interviews. We plan to continue using these same tools for this purpose.

**E. For baccalaureate-granting colleges, plans for determining how the structure and content of the 12 College-Option credits will be developed.**

Students may be required to take zero, one, two, three, or four college option courses. The zero and one possibilities are for students transferring from other baccalaureate-granting institutions with all or part of their College Option requirements already satisfied. The two, three, and four course cases apply to students transferring in with an associates degree, 30+ credits but no degree, and fewer than 30 credits, respectively.

| <b>Number of College Option Courses Required</b> | <b>Required Structure</b>   |
|--|---|
| 0  | None  |
| 1  | One Language course   |
| 2  | One Language course<br>One Literature course                        |
| 3  | One Language course<br>One Literature course<br>One Science course  |
| 4  | Two Language courses<br>One Literature course<br>One Science course |

“Language,” “Literature,” and “Science” courses are explained in the second part of this document.

The requirements in the above table will be adjusted as necessary based on the particular Common Core courses a student has already satisfied. For example students majoring in one of the Life and Physical sciences will not be required to take additional Science courses as part of their College Option. Similarly for the Language and Literature requirements.

**F. Plans for changing, if needed, general education requirements linked to particular majors.**

We have identified two populations of students who will need to be exempted from the full set of General Education requirements, Music majors and the various Education minors, both of which have extremely high credit requirements that would make it impossible to complete the degree within 120 credits.

Music majors will be exempt from the Creative Expression area requirement. Education students will not be required to take more than 120 credits to complete their Education and General Education requirements.

**G. Plans for changing web sites, course catalogs, or other curricular information to reflect changes in courses and requirements and for insuring broad dissemination of materials on the Common Core to the campus community.**

Queens has a strong Advising Center that deals with issues both related to advising and to dissemination of materials on college degree requirements. The transition to the new curriculum will require additional resources for them to accomplish, but their mission and structure will not need to change.

The Office of General Education has been serving as a coordinator and disseminator of information for the current Perspectives curriculum. This role includes the task of keeping the Advising Center informed of the current inventory of General Education Courses, for example.

As part of its work, GEAC has developed a course management system for tracking course proposals and their progress through various committees, Senate, and Board of Trustees approvals. This system will be expanded to cover all curriculum changes at the college and to incorporate the changes due to Pathways in particular.

**H. Plans for informing advisers, other employees, and students about the new requirements.**

The Academic Senate serves as the locus of curriculum development at the college. The head of the Advising Center sits as an *ex-officio* member of the UCC, and good lines of communication already exist between the Provost's Office, the Registrar, the General Education Office, and the Senate.

The Advisement Center, the Office of General Education, and GEAC already provide web-based information about the curriculum for both student and faculty consumption. Although additional resources will be needed during the transition to Pathways, the basic structures already in place will be responsible for making that transition as seamless as possible.

## 2. The Structure of the Common Core and College Option at Queens College

In this part of our plan we describe the Common Core and College Option structure to be implemented at Queens, introducing implementation issues as appropriate.

### English Composition I

The current English 110 course will be revised to be run as a 3 hr; 3 cr. course to replace its current 3 hr; ;1 consult; 3 cr. structure. The English Department will revise the syllabus so that it explicitly satisfies all the learning objectives developed by the Pathways Steering Committee for this course, and will reduce the time students spend with the instructor by 25% to accommodate the reduced number of hours allowed for the course.

The current “learning communities” structure will be maintained: each section of English 110 will be paired with a course from the Flexible Common Core (FCC) insofar as possible.

There are significant resource allocation issues that this course brings up. All writing courses at Queens have section sizes capped at 25 students. There is a large population of adjuncts who currently teach two sections of English 110 and are paid for eight hours of work. Either they take on an additional section or face a pay cut of 25%.

The FCC courses paired with English 110 will all be taught as “jumbo” courses, which will be broken down into small sections in English 110. Presently, this is the case for ##% of the Perspectives courses that are paired with English 110, but to preserve resources, we will have to make this the general policy. Unfortunately, this policy means that there will be two sets of FCC courses taught at the college: the jumbo courses taught as part of learning communities, and the smaller courses that must incorporate the “produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments” learning outcome required of all FCC courses. This issue will be discussed further below.

### English Composition II

This course will be implemented as a “second semester seminar” in which Queens College rounds out the freshman year experience already begun with the first semester “learning communities” course. All sections of the course will be offered in seminar format, but will vary in their topics.

- Departments will develop “writing within the discipline” courses that are primarily writing courses, but which address the particular writing demands within the discipline, such as discipline-specific research reports or other written structures appropriate to the discipline.
- Divisions will develop “writing within the division” courses that are primarily writing courses, but which address common writing demands across the disciplines within a division.

Courses satisfying either of the two options will be developed so that their syllabi address all learning objectives by the Pathways Steering Committee's report for this course.

The resources needed to offer this course will be an enormous burden for the college. There is no intellectually honest way to offer the course other than in small sections, placing tremendous demands on the college to fund faculty who are qualified to provide the instructional feedback that will be needed for students to develop good writing skills. There are approximately 40 departments in 4 divisions at the college, so even if every department and every division develops a new course for this requirement, at 25 students per course, there will be only 1,100 seats available for this course. Given the sizes of many of the departments, half that number of new courses seems optimistic.

The only resolution to this dilemma that we can see is to require the English Department to implement a fallback option, a version of our current English 120 course) to take up the slack with a generic English Composition II course.

### The W Overlay Requirement

- The current Queens College "writing intensive" graduation requirement is for students to complete three "W" courses. W courses require 10-15 pages of evaluated writing in three or more assignments, attention to writing in class, exams that include essay questions, and a maximum class size of 30 students.
- All Flexible Common Core courses must satisfy a learning outcome that is worded as, "Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions."

Reconciling these two requirements poses serious difficulties for Queens. If we take the Pathways required learning outcome at face value, there is no way to offer FCC courses with large sections, with the exception of the jumbo courses that we will pair with English 110 learning communities.

We fear that "well-reasoned written or oral arguments" will, in practice, be dumbed-down to mean "class participation," for example using clickers to register votes in a large lecture hall.

In this context, Queens will continue to require three W courses for graduation, but students completing English Composition II at Queens or elsewhere being deemed to have satisfied one of the three.

The W overlay requirement, given Academic Senate approval, will be revised to make explicit the phrase "evaluated writing" so that at least one writing assignment will involve multiple drafts, with feedback with regard to both form and content from the instructor between revisions.

At the present time, there are two separate faculty bodies involved in writing requirements at Queens: the Writing-intensive subcommittee of the UCC (WISC) evaluates courses proposed for W designation, while the Writing at Queens (WAQ) program provides much of the support for both faculty and students involved in W

and other writing components of the curriculum. No body is responsible for verifying that W courses actually implement the current requirements for W courses.

Although it is not strictly a part of our Pathways implementation plan, the Academic Senate will review current W policies (and possibly to adopt the clarification of the “evaluated writing” component mentioned above), decide how to allocate functions between WISC and WAQ, and consider implementing a re-certification policy for W courses based on actual syllabi and student work from approved W courses.

All W courses will be either FCC or College Option Courses

### **The O Overlay Requirement**

The Senate will adopt an “Oral” (O) requirement that requires evaluated oral presentation as a component of O courses. All students will be required to complete one O course at Queens. All O courses will be either FCC or College Option courses.

### **Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning**

The Mathematics Department will revise the syllabus for Mathematics 110 and 115 so that they both meet all the learning objectives developed by the Pathways Steering Committee for Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning courses.

Based on the Compass exam, students can place into a course at a higher level than 115. Presently, students who place into a pre-calculus course do not have to take a Mathematics course at Queens. Under Pathways, all students will be required to complete Mathematics 110, 115, or a course that has one of those courses as a prerequisite. In this way, we do not have to revise syllabi to include Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning learning objectives, because those objectives will have been satisfied by a prerequisite.

### **Life and Physical Sciences**

The goal at Queens College is to make sure that students who satisfy this requirement at Queens learn “good science” whether they intend to major in the sciences or not. In keeping with the traditional liberal arts model in which the first few semesters are devoted to exploration rather than specialization, we will make sure that students who take a General Education science course will still be able to transition into a science major without having to take a course that overlaps with their General Education science course.

All courses that satisfy this requirement at Queens, in addition to covering the mandated Pathways learning outcomes, will meet the guidelines outlined in the current QC “Perspectives” requirements.

Students will be able to satisfy this requirement in one of two ways:

- The division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MNS) will develop a set of 3 hr; 3cr. general education courses that satisfy the learning objectives of this area.



- Individual departments, not limited to MNS, will develop 3hr; 3cr. general education courses that satisfy the learning objectives of this area.

In addition, individual departments within the MNS division will develop “bridge” courses that provide an entry to the major for students who take a general education course within their discipline to satisfy this requirement.

Students who begin the major in one of the Life or Physical sciences (Biology, Chemistry, FNES, Geology, Physics, Psychology) will satisfy this requirement by completing a 4 cr. laboratory course that is a required or optional part of the major.

Some introductory lab courses will be structured so that students will be able to complete part of the course requirements within the 3 hr; 3cr. limitation, while other students will be able to receive 3 lec; 2 lab; 4 cr. by attending additional class/lab meetings.

### Flexible Common Core

All Queens College courses that satisfy Flexible Common Core (FCC) areas will also satisfy the guidelines outlined in the current QC “Perspectives” requirements. Thus, currently approved Perspectives courses will need to be revised so that their syllabi address a sufficient subset of the list of learning objectives for the corresponding Pathways FCC area. Not all Perspectives courses will be able to be “shoe-horned” into Pathways courses, and those courses will no longer be offered as General Education courses.

We have begun examining the shoehorn approach, and concluded that each existing Perspectives course will need to be submitted, with justification and sample syllabus, for evaluation by the UCC or its designee, just as Perspectives courses were originally submitted to GEAC.

Departments, such as Computer Science, will be encouraged to submit courses to satisfy the Scientific World area in order to incorporate a degree of rigor in the students’ ability to reason about, and make effective use of, technology in their careers.

Students who take all their FCC courses at Queens must take at least two of their six courses from the Social Science division and at least two of their six from the Arts and Humanities division. The same restriction applies to transfer students who take only some of their FCC courses at Queens. This divisional requirement will use the Queens College discipline to division mapping, not whatever mapping might apply at the transferring institution. Implementation of this requirement will be structured so that no student is required to take extra FCC courses because of it. That is, whatever number of FCC courses are left to be completed at QC, the “two from both divisions” requirement will be reduced as necessary to fit within the “six from five areas” FCC structure.



## College Option

As outlined in Section E of Part I, the College Option requires students to take zero, one, two, three, or four courses, depending on their transfer status. Here we clarify what we mean by Language, Literature, and Science courses.

### Language

Several disciplines are able to offer courses that satisfy College Option Language requirements at Queens, not just foreign language programs. We quote from the Queens College response to the initial Steering Committee report last November:

Language courses must meet at least two of the following learning outcomes in addition to the three learning outcomes of all FCC courses:

Students will be able to:

- Differentiate types of language and appreciate their structures.
- Appreciate what is lost or gained in translations among languages.
- Relate language, thought, and culture.
- Compare natural languages, formal languages, and logic.
- Understand the processes involved in learning languages.

Our intent is to introduce *language as an object of study*, one that illuminates issues of thought, culture, and intelligence. Because of the city's cultural and linguistic diversity, CUNY is especially well positioned to address this issue.

By raising language to an area in its own right, students will gain a perspective on such otherwise amorphous topics as “critical thinking,” “informed decision making,” “cultural norms,” and even “creativity.” Language underlies notions of knowledge and understanding. Rather than hope that these outcomes will emerge from the process of taking courses in the other areas of the required and flexible common core, this area brings them to the fore and addresses them directly.

We see this as an enabling requirement: courses from many disciplines can be structured to satisfy it. The possibility of introducing cross-disciplinary courses to this area is an exciting one, but not required.

The required Language course(s) are *in addition to* FCC courses. One course cannot satisfy both the Language and an FCC requirement.

### Literature

A major loss from the General Education program at Queens is Reading Literature (RL). The Perspectives curriculum required two courses in this area, and the Pathways structure requires none.

To a certain extent, we plan to incorporate Literature into the English Composition II course: courses which previously satisfied the RL requirement will be invited to revise their curricula to include both writing instruction (not the less-directive W requirements) *and* the study of literature in any of a variety of contexts.

However, by elevating Literature to a College Option requirement of the first order, we will insure that our students are exposed to Literature in the broadest sense. Formal specifications for this requirement, along the lines of the current Perspectives RL requirement, will be developed during the Spring 2012 semester.

### Science

There are two ways to satisfy this requirement:

1. Students who satisfy the Life and Physical sciences General Education requirement with a Life Sciences course will be required to take a Physical Sciences General Education course.
2. Students will be allowed to take an approved course offered by a department other than one of the Life or Physical science departments. Guidelines for these courses will be based on the existing “NS” Perspectives requirement. Current “NS+L” courses will also be eligible to satisfy this requirement, but the college will guarantee that there are enough 3-hour 3-credit courses available so that no student will be required to take an NS+L course unless they choose to
3. Students who complete a General Education science course and decide to take a lab-only “bridge” course into the major will be able to satisfy this requirement using the bridge course.

### Culminating Experience

The college presently has a “culminating experience” graduation requirement, which we will continue to use. For many students, this requirement is satisfied by completing a “capstone” course in their major. For others, a “synthesis” course, either within a discipline or across disciplines may be used. Our implementation plan has three activities involved with this requirement:

1. Encourage all majors to include a capstone requirement within the major. Majors that do not wish to include a capstone will be expected to make their rationale for doing so explicit to students.
2. Develop more synthesis courses. We currently have a “teacher-scholar grant” program that helps with this effort, and additional resources would help move this initiative forward. Where possible, courses that satisfy this requirement will also satisfy an FCC requirement.
3. Develop an “experiential learning” option for satisfying this requirement. We have the infrastructure in place to move this option forward (an office of coop education), but developing it as an option for satisfying the Culminating Experience requirement is still in the early stages. With the support of the Academic Senate, however, we hope to begin offering this option to students at the time of the Pathways rollout.