

UNK General Studies Program Course Submission Guidelines for Portal Courses

This document describes the process, guidelines and submission procedure used in evaluating Portal course proposals for inclusion in UNK's General Studies program.

Course Approval Process

Course proposals are submitted electronically (in Word format) to the Director of General Studies (general.studies@unk.edu). Course proposals are presented to the GSC at a regularly scheduled meeting. If the course meets established criteria, then the Council will vote to disseminate the proposal to campus; if not, the Council can either reject the proposal or return the proposal for revision and resubmission for consideration at the next scheduled GSC meeting. Upon approval, the Director of General Studies disseminates the proposal for campus comments for a minimum of two weeks. The Council will vote on the proposal at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The Council's decision will be forwarded to the SVCASA for final approval. Approved portal courses may be offered in the next term after receiving full approval from the GSC and SVCASA.

Note, the course approval process takes time. Making sure submitted proposals are complete and allowing adequate time for necessary revisions can facilitate the process.

Faculty are strongly encouraged to meet with a General Studies Council representative during the preparation of their course proposal. Faculty must meet with a General Studies Council representative prior to submitting the proposal for consideration.

The GSC will follow the Guidelines below in reviewing each GS course proposal to determine the extent to which the proposed course addresses the required Portal learning outcomes. The primary learning outcome and purpose of the Portal course is critical thinking skills.

Following is information about Portal courses to assist faculty in creating course proposals. Included here are the rationale, learning outcomes, and course criteria and policies.

Rationale

The purpose of the 3 hour Portal course is to help students become intentional learners. Students analyze critical issues confronting individuals and society as they pertain to the discipline through which the Portal course is taught. At the beginning of their university experience, many freshmen do not have strong skills in critical thinking and reasoning. The Portal is intended to help them succeed in their university education by mentoring them through the process of analyzing important ideas and articulating their own conclusions.

Required Learning Outcomes

Required Portal Learning Outcomes to be included as course objectives in each syllabus:

On completing the Portal, students can

- 1) Analyze critical issues confronting the individual and society in a global context.
- 2) Interpret an argument through engaged discourse within the discipline.
- 3) Construct a cogent argument pertaining to the course topic.

In addition, the Portal must address one or more of the following GS program level outcomes and include them as course objectives in each syllabus:

The Portal develops the learner's ability to

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
- 3) Communicate effectively in spoken form.
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
- 5) Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
- 6) Evaluate in context significant concepts relating to democracy.

Course Criteria

A Portal course must:

- 1) Examine a well-articulated theme relevant to a discipline.
- 2) Have a significant writing focus and requirement.
- 3) Describe the disciplinary approach used (taken or utilized) in addressing the subject matter.
- 4) Articulate the purposes of a broad liberal education and the goals of the GS program.

Course Policies

- 1) Departments may collaborate on a multiple-section Portal centering on a public lecture series that students from all sections would be required to attend.
- 2) Students may take any course numbered 188 in any department to satisfy the portal requirement irrespective of their major / minor.
- 4) Departments cannot require students to take any particular portal; students may choose which Portal to take and in which discipline to take it. Students are encouraged to take the Portal course in a discipline other than their intended major or minor.
- 5) Students are strongly encouraged to take the Portal in the first two semesters.
- 6) Students transferring in 24+ hours of General Studies credit are exempt from taking the Portal (although they must still complete the total required 45 hours in GS).
- 7) Assessment of the Portal learning outcomes will be conducted using the GSC approved instrument and rubric.

Submission Procedure

Course proposals consist of three parts: **Part 1:** Portal Course Proposal Checklist; **Part 2:** Course Information; and **Part 3:** Course Syllabus. *Course proposals must be reviewed by a college representative to the GSC prior to submission.* Completed proposals must be submitted electronically (in Word format) to the General Studies Office (general.studies@unk.edu); proposals that are incomplete will be returned to the author.

NOTE: Course prefixes with an existing Portal (188) course do not need to enter subsequent Portal topics in the in the online course approval system. It comes only to the General Studies Council for approval. However, some colleges require that proposed new Portal topics be approved at the college level. Consult the dean's office of your college for further guidance.

Faculty should use the Portal Course Proposal Checklist as a guide to ensure their proposal includes all requested information and that information is complete; the completed checklist – signed by GSC representative - must be submitted with Parts 2 and 3 of the proposal.

Part 1: Portal Course Proposal Checklist

Course Information (Part 2). Proposal includes requested information and information is complete:	Y	N
A. Basic course information (course title and number, instructor, contact information)		
B. Type of portal course (new or existing)		
C. GS Program level learning outcomes identified		
Evidence presented on how those learning outcomes will be achieved		
D. Portal learning outcomes identified		
Evidence presented on how those learning outcomes will be achieved		
Course Syllabus (Part 3)	Y	N
Syllabus submitted		
Syllabus includes purpose statements (General Studies and Portal)		
Syllabus identifies Portal learning outcomes and which Program Level learning outcomes are addressed in the course		
Syllabus identifies how achievement of those learning outcomes will be demonstrated through course activities.		
Syllabus complete and includes all requested information in the specified order.		
GSC Representative reviewing proposal:		
Name (please print):		
Signature:		

Part 2: Course Information

- A. Indicate:
 Portal title
 Course number: All Portals are numbered 188. Distinctions can be made between them within a given department by using section numbers.
 Department proposing the topic
 Contact person
- B. Indicate if the proposed course is:
 The first portal course offered by the Department or for the course prefix (note – first time portals must go through the formal Academic Affairs process and entered in the online course approval system.); or

A subsequent portal course offered by the Department or for the course prefix.

- C. Indicate which PROGRAM-LEVEL learning outcome(s) will be reinforced by this course. A minimum of one program-level outcome must be addressed by the course and these outcomes should be clearly reflected in the course syllabus as objectives for the course.

PROGRAM-LEVEL OUTCOMES (GS courses must meet at least one program-level outcome)

Students can:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
- 3) Communicate effectively in spoken form.
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
- 5) Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
- 6) Evaluate in context significant concepts relating to democracy.

Explain clearly how the course meets the stated program-level learning outcomes and how achievement of those outcomes will be demonstrated. In other words, describe what specific opportunities (i.e. activities, assignments) the course offers the students to:

- 1) Acquire knowledge / skills in the GS program-level outcomes; and
- 2) Demonstrate achievement of the GS program-level outcomes.

- D. Indicate how the following Portal learning outcomes will be met by this course:

On completing the Portal, students can

- 1) Analyze critical issues confronting the individual and society in a global context.
- 2) Interpret an argument through engaged discourse within the discipline.
- 3) Construct a cogent argument pertaining to the course topic.

These outcomes should be clearly reflected in the course syllabus as objectives for the course. Explain clearly and briefly how the course meets these Portal learning outcomes and how achievement of those outcomes will be demonstrated. In other words, describe what specific opportunities (i.e. activities, assignments) the course offers the students to:

- 1) Acquire knowledge / skills in the portal outcomes

and

- 2) Demonstrate achievement of the portal outcomes.

In its review of Portal course proposals, the General Studies Council will consider the following questions:

- Does the course include at least one or more of the GS program level learning outcomes as objectives for the course and is it reflected in the course syllabus?
- Does the course clearly address the approved GS Portal learning outcomes and list those outcomes in the syllabus as being part of the objectives for the course?
- What is the well-articulated theme and how does it connect to issues confronting individuals and/or society?
- Does the course clearly incorporate (integrate) a global context and is it reflected in the syllabus?
- Does the course provide students opportunities to develop the knowledge/skills necessary for successful achievement of the Portal learning outcomes and identify those opportunities in the syllabus?
- Does the course provide students with opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes and reflect those opportunities in the syllabus?
- Does the syllabus clearly identify how the achievement of the stated learning outcomes will be demonstrated? In other words, does the syllabus incorporate the GS approved Portal assessment instrument and rubric in the evaluation of students' demonstrating achievement of stated learning outcomes.
- Does the syllabus include all of the requested items in the specified order?

Part 3: Course Syllabus All syllabi should follow the template provided below; syllabi may include additional information but the following must be provided at a minimum.

All syllabi must include the following information ***in the order listed***:

- a) Course Title
- b) Course prefix, number, and section
- c) Instructor Name
- d) Instructor office location and office hours
- e) Instructor phone number and email address
- f) Office hours
- g) Required text / course readings (identify required textbooks, readings, viewings, or other course material; are these materials to be purchased or will they be available on Canvas?)
- h) Course Prerequisites
- i) Statement identifying that the course is a General Studies course (identify area and type of course, e.g., HIST 188 is a General Studies Portal course)
- j) Purpose statement for General Studies (*see Appendix A*)
- k) Purpose statement for portal courses (*see Appendix A*)
- l) Course description (for the portal course being proposed)
- m) Course objectives (brief explanation of objectives of the course, including an overall learning objective for the course)
- n) Indicate which GS PROGRAM-LEVEL learning outcome(s) will be reinforced by this course. Explain clearly and briefly how the course meets the stated program-level learning outcomes and describe what specific opportunities (i.e. activities, assignments) the course provides students to:
 - 1) Acquire knowledge / skills in the GS program-level outcomes

and

 - 2) Demonstrate achievement of those GS program-level outcomes.
- o) Indicate the Portal learning outcomes. Explain clearly and briefly how the course meets the portal learning outcomes and describe what specific opportunities (i.e. activities, assignments) the course provides students to:
 - 1) Acquire knowledge / skills in the portal outcomes

and

 - 2) Demonstrate achievement of those portal outcomes
- p) Course outline / format (e.g., lecture laboratory, discussion, etc.)
- q) General grading criteria and weighting for all course projects and other forms of student assessment. (A complete description of each individual assignment is not necessary. However, students need to have a general understanding of the work requirements for the course (e.g. a 3 page paper every 2 weeks; a meaningful paragraph at the beginning of each class, etc.) and how these will be graded (e.g. graded on mechanics and content or graded solely on content, etc.). Students also need to be able to understand which projects carry more, or less, weight in regards to the final grade.)
- r) Grading scale for the determination of final course grades, including how many points or what percentage is required for each letter grade.
- s) Course policy / expectations on academic honesty / integrity, attendance, class participation, email communications, and conduct.
- t) UNK's Academic Dishonesty policy
- u) University statement on disabilities and those who are pregnant

- v) University statement on reporting student sexual harassment, sexual violence or sexual assault.

Optional information that may be included:

- w) Policy on extra credit
- x) Tentative course schedule, including due dates for major assignments or dates of major examinations. (It is recognized that course dates will change from semester to semester and year to year, but if there is a major project due every 3 weeks and an examination during the middle of the semester and during finals week, these need to be indicated.)

Appendix A: Purpose Statements (GSC approved 4/2017)

Purpose of General Studies: *The UNK General Studies program helps students acquire knowledge and abilities; to understand the world; to make connections across disciplines; and to solve contemporary problems. The GS program is intentionally structured to allow students to build necessary skills in the Foundational Core classes while making the transition to college level coursework and forming critical thinking skills in the Portal class. Students then explore a broad cross-section of academic topics in the Distribution Area and finally finish their GS program in the Capstone course that is designed to help students synthesize, through interdisciplinary instruction, their knowledge, skills, and experiences across the curriculum.*

Purpose of the Portal Course: *The primary purpose of the portal course in the GS program is to help students develop their critical thinking skills by engaging in a disciplinary themed course analyzing critical issues in that discipline as it affects both the individual and society with a unique global perspective. The portal course helps students to make the transition from high school to college level expectations in critical thinking and analysis of argumentation through written and/or oral discourse.*