



UNK General Education Handbook

University of Nebraska at Kearney

2026-2027 Academic Year

Overview of General Education (GE) at UNK

The UNK General Education Program provides a structured framework to support student learning across disciplines. The program ensures students develop essential academic skills, gain broad knowledge, and cultivate dispositions necessary for success in a pluralistic society.

The program is organized around [categories called Learning Objectives/Program Essential Requirements \(LOPERs\)](#), which define shared expectations for student learning within each category. Structurally, the LOPER categories can be grouped into four purposes:

<u>Transitioning to College</u> LOPER 1 – First-Year Seminar (LOPR 101)	
<u>Foundational Skills</u> LOPER 2 – Writing Skills LOPER 3 – Oral Communication Skills LOPER 4 – Mathematics, Statistics, & Quantitative Reasoning	<u>Broad Knowledge</u> LOPER 5 – Visual or Performing Arts LOPER 6 – Humanities LOPER 7 – Social Science LOPER 8 – Natural Science
<u>Dispositions</u> LOPER 9 – Civic Competency & Engagement LOPER 10 – Respect for Human Diversity LOPER 11 – Wellness (optional)	

Students must complete three credit hours in each LOPER category 1-10 and complete a minimum of 30 total GE credit hours. [Some courses fulfill two LOPER requirements](#), so students may complete LOPERs 1-10 and still have less than 30 total GE credit hours. To get to 30, students may take additional GE courses from any category, including LOPER 11 (Wellness).

Students may end up taking more than 30 GE credit hours because some degree programs require multiple courses within the same LOPER. (Consult the [current undergraduate catalog](#).) Also, some courses that fulfill LOPERs 4 and 8 are more than three credit hours.

- [General Education Course Listing by LOPER category](#)

Role of the General Education Council (GEC)

The GEC oversees development, implementation, and improvement of the program. It establishes learning objectives, reviews courses and policies, and oversees assessment practices.

Membership consists of 13 voting faculty representatives across colleges (six from Arts & Sciences, three from Business & Technology, three from Education, and one from Calvin T. Ryan Library) and five non-voting, *ex officio* members: the Director of General Education (Council Chair), Senior Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs (SVCAA), University Registrar, Director of Assessment & Accreditation, and Director of Academic Advising & Career Development.

- [Current GEC Roster](#)

Faculty representatives are appointed by the SVCAA to three-year terms that are staggered evenly within each college.

The GEC operates according to [its Bylaws](#), some of which are detailed in this handbook.

Communication with Faculty & Departments

While the Director of General Education communicates with the campus about General Education policy developments, procedures, and Council meeting notices, **it is important for GEC members to communicate with and get feedback from the faculty they represent** about issues discussed at Council meetings. GEC members should establish regular communication pathways with their departments and “neighboring” (whether by discipline or physical proximity) ones that do not have a faculty member on the Council. Especially on major issues, it is important to have representative faculty views in discussions.

Responsibilities of Council Members

The [General Education Program Bylaws](#) Article II.A. lists the duties of the GEC. Four are emphasized here:

- Develop procedures for evaluating General Education courses
- Approve or reject General Education course proposals
- Oversee assessment of student achievement and other aspects of the General Education program
- Regularly review General Education program structure and objectives

Council business is conducted at:

- **Regular Meetings** – held at 3:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month, September – May except January
- **Special Meetings** – called as needed by the Director of General Education, Senior Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, or by written request by GEC members representing at least two colleges

Tasks may be assigned by the Director of General Education or the GEC to one or more of the three Council subcommittees (Oversight, Course Review, Assessment) for addressing between meetings. See the [Subcommittee Roles and Service](#) section for more details.

Meeting attendance is important. By default, meetings are in-person and GEC members may only vote in person. (This rule does not apply if, under extenuating circumstances, a meeting is called over Zoom.) Regular attendance is expected. After three absences in one academic year, a GEC member may be considered for replacement.

Be prepared for meetings. Agenda packets often include a great deal of information – reports, course proposals, enrollment and assessment data, campus feedback, etc. Please review these before coming to meetings.

Meetings and Processes

Regular meetings are held at 3:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month, September – May except January.

Attendance and Proxy Rules

Regular attendance is expected. By default, meetings are called to be held in person. After three absences in one academic year, a GEC member may be considered for replacement. A GEC member who will be absent may have another tenured faculty member attend the meeting in their place and act as a proxy for discussion and voting. The Director of General Education must be notified of this no later than 12:00 noon the day of the meeting. Having a proxy **does not erase the GEC member's absence**.

Agendas

As shown [in this example](#), the GEC meeting agenda format is based largely on Robert's Rules and is like that used by most academic and community governing bodies.

Items may be placed a GEC meeting agenda by the Director of General Education or the Senior Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs. Agenda item requests by other GEC members must go through one of these two officers. The GEC votes on agenda approval prior to the meeting. **Here is the timeline of agenda-related events leading up to a regular meeting:**

- 9-10 calendar days before meeting: The Director of General Education sends an agenda draft to the GEC and solicits item additions.
- 7 days before meeting: The Director notifies campus about the upcoming GEC meeting and publishes the agenda *via* e-mail announcement. While agenda items are set, the packet materials may not be complete at this point. The Director posts the agenda on Teams for GEC approval.
- 2 days before meeting: Deadline for agenda approval *via* Teams.
- 1-2 days before meeting: The Director reminds campus about the upcoming GEC meeting and publishes the agenda with complete packet materials *via* e-mail announcement and the [General Education website](#).
- 1-2 days before meeting: The Director communicates with the GEC to summarize the agenda items and share pertinent insights.

Meeting Rules and Processes

Meetings proceed within a Robert's Rules framework but most of the time in a relaxed fashion. However, when policy language is under consideration, formal rules on motions and amendments are employed.

A quorum is defined to be 2/3 of the voting members, so at least nine must be present at a meeting in order for the GEC to conduct business.

Passing a motion requires one more vote than a majority of the voting members present:

- 8 votes if 12 or 13 GEC voting members are present
- 7 votes if 10 or 11 GEC voting members are present
- 6 votes if 9 GEC voting members are present

If a meeting is held in person, GEC members and their proxies must attend in person to discuss and vote.

Only GEC members, proposers of new courses for the GE program, and individuals invited to give special presentations or provide other information may participate in meeting discussions. Other attendees may only observe the meeting unless asked by the Council to comment.

Special Meetings

Special meetings may be called as needed by the Director of General Education, Senior Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, or by written request by GEC members representing at least two colleges. These have a narrower business item agenda than regular meetings.

Key Policies and Frameworks

Most GEC business pertains to course approval, program changes, and [Bylaws](#) changes. The procedural path to adoption depends on whether an approval or change is deemed to be *Major* or *Minor*. This is determined by the Oversight Subcommittee with guidance from the [Bylaws](#).

In short, for Minor changes, a subcommittee approves release of the proposed item for campus comment and the GEC can adopt it at its next meeting. For Major changes, the GEC must approve both the release for campus comment and item approval – this requires two separate meetings – that is followed by a faculty vote and adoption decision by the Senior Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs.

Process for Minor approvals/changes

1. Item is brought to the attention of the Director of General Education
2. Item is assigned to the appropriate subcommittee for consideration
3. The subcommittee may ask for clarifications or revisions. When approved, the item is sent out for campus comment.
4. The item and campus comments are placed on the next GEC meeting for full Council consideration
5. The Council may ask for clarifications or revisions. When approved, the item is adopted.

Process for Major approvals/changes

1. Item is brought to the attention of the Director of General Education
2. Item is assigned to the appropriate subcommittee for consideration
3. The subcommittee may ask for clarifications or revisions. When finished, the item is placed on the next GEC meeting agenda and the subcommittee provides a report.
4. The GEC discusses the item and may ask for clarifications or revisions. When approved, the item is sent out for campus comment and review by all college educational/academic policy committees and the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs committee.
5. The item and campus and committee comments are placed on the next GEC meeting for Council consideration of approval.
6. The Council may ask for further clarifications or revisions. When approved, the item is sent to the Director of General Education to conduct a faculty vote.
7. The vote results are announced to campus and sent to the Senior Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, who decides whether the item is adopted.

New Course Approvals

All proposals for new courses to be included in the General Education program are considered Minor changes. The Course Review Subcommittee conducts the initial review and approves the proposal to be released for campus comment.

Course Proposal Deadlines and Timelines

Barring delays due to requested clarifications and revisions, the complete approval process is designed to be completed in 3-4 weeks. Deadlines and timelines for the 2026-27 academic year are:

Submit Proposal to GE Director by:	Review by GEC Course Approval Subcommittee	Campus Comment Window	Consideration by whole GEC at this meeting:
Thursday, September 10	September 14-18	September 21-28	<i>Thursday, October 1</i>
Monday, October 12	October 14-23	October 26 – November 2	<i>Thursday, November 5</i>
Thursday, November 12	November 16-20	November 23-30	<i>Thursday, December 3</i>
Thursday, January 14	January 18-22	January 25 – February 1	<i>Thursday, February 4</i>
Thursday, February 11	February 15-19	February 22 – March 1	<i>Thursday, March 4</i>
Thursday, March 4	March 8-12	March 22-29	<i>Thursday, April 1</i>
Thursday, April 15	April 19-23	April 26 – May 3	<i>Thursday, May 6</i>

Program Changes

Recommended changes in the General Education program may be initiated by the Senior Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, GEC, or another academic governing body (Faculty Senate or college-level) within the institution. Prior to commencing the approval process, the Oversight Subcommittee determines if the proposed change is considered Minor or Major in accordance with these guidelines from the [Bylaws](#):

Examples of Major changes include changes to the total program required hours, hours required in any GE category, addition or elimination of any GE category, or other changes as approved by the Oversight Subcommittee as major changes.

Examples of Minor changes include changes to the learning outcomes, assessment rubrics, or other changes as approved by the Oversight Subcommittee as minor changes.

Bylaws Changes

Recommended changes in the General Education program may be initiated by the Senior Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, GEC, or another academic governing body (Faculty Senate or college-level) within the institution. Prior to commencing the approval process, the Oversight Subcommittee determines if the proposed change is considered Minor or Major in accordance with these guidelines from the [Bylaws](#):

Examples of Major changes include changes to the composition of the Council and revisions of the duties of Council members or the Council Director or other changes as approved by the Oversight Subcommittee as major changes

Examples of Minor changes include subcommittee roles and procedures and other language changes that do not affect the fundamental duties of Council members or the Council Director or other changes as approved by the Oversight Subcommittee as minor changes

Subcommittee Roles and Service

There are three standing GEC subcommittees: Oversight, Course Review, and Assessment. These serve to aid the General Education Council in its operations regarding structure, governance, assessment, and course eligibility in the General Education program. In addition to the charges and duties given below, subcommittees may be assigned tasks by the Council, the Director of General Education, and the Senior Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs. **Each subcommittee typically meets once or twice between regular GEC meetings.** Most meetings are *via* Zoom or e-mail.

Each subcommittee consists of four or five voting Council members – two from the College of Arts & Sciences, one from the College of Business & Technology, one from the College of Education and possibly one from the Library, who chooses one of the subcommittees to serve on – and the Director of General Education as an *ex-officio* member. Other *ex-officio* Council members may join a subcommittee at its request. For example, the UNK Director of Assessment & Accreditation often joins Assessment Subcommittee meetings.

Oversight Subcommittee Responsibilities

This subcommittee oversees implementation of the General Education program governance and meeting rules. They may propose changes in these to the Council. They conduct the initial review of bylaws and program change proposals and determine if they are Major or Minor.

Course Review Subcommittee Responsibilities

The subcommittee conducts the initial reviews of courses proposed for inclusion, or to remain, in the General Education program and makes recommendations to the Council. They may authorize proceeding to the campus comment period.

Assessment Subcommittee Responsibilities

This subcommittee oversees assessment data collection procedures, conducts the initial review of each annual General Education assessment report and brings items to the attention of the Council. They review and act on matters pertaining to Program and LOPER category goals and learning objectives. For changes classified as Minor, this subcommittee can authorize proceeding to the campus comment period.

Subcommittee Assignments

Subcommittee assignments are for one-year terms and are made by the Director of General Education no later than a few days after the first regular GEC meeting of the academic year. GEC members will be polled on their preferred (ranked) subcommittee choices. The Director will honor these choices to the greatest extent possible within the following guidelines:

1. Returning GEC members will always be assigned to their same subcommittee as the previous year if that is their top choice.
2. First tiebreaker – Priority will be given to GEC members with the most consecutive years of service on the Council.
3. Second tiebreaker - Priority will be given to GEC members with the longest time remaining on their Council terms.
4. Final tiebreaker – Assignment will be made with best fit in mind based on the GEC members' expertise and experience.

Assessment and Continuous Improvement

This academic year, a new General Education assessment plan will be implemented. Each LOPER category has one or two learning objectives, each with a number of performance indicators that will be measured according to approved rubrics. [These are found on the GE Assessment webpage.](#)

Each semester, GE course faculty will measure the performance indicators for their course LOPER category(ies) using Canvas and the Learning Outcomes Rubrics function. The approved assessment rubrics will be available as Learning Outcomes Rubrics on the course Canvas sites. Faculty will apply the appropriate rubric(s) to assignments they are using as assessment tools. Rubric scores will be collected and processed using the new eLumens Insight software.

Each fall, the Director of General Education will compose a GE assessment report for the previous academic year. This will first be reviewed by the Assessment Subcommittee before being released to campus and discussed by the full Council. Either body may recommend steps to support program and/or course improvement.

GE Council Teams Site and Other Resources

GEC members are members of the [UNK-General Education Teams site](#) and the [GE Council channel](#). Within this channel, GEC documents are stored and may be viewed using Teams or SharePoint. Folders include past meeting agendas and minutes, materials for the next meeting, assessment, and individual folders for each subcommittee.

Communications from the Director of General Education to the GEC may be through e-mail, Teams posts or both. **Meeting agenda approvals are made *via* replies to a Teams post.**

Forms, Policies and Procedures

Submit Forms & Take Action

- [Submit a General Education course proposal](#)
- Submit a student petition to:
 - [Substitute a course to fulfill a LOPER category requirement](#)
 - [Apply for a LOPR 101 grade replacement](#) after retaking the course with a different topic
 - [Apply for a LOPR 101 waiver](#) – ***for transfer students who started at UNK in the Fall 2025 semester or later***
 - [Apply for a LOPR 126 waiver](#) – ***for students who started at UNK before Fall 2025***

Teaching General Education Courses

- [General Education learning objectives and performance indicators](#)
- [Syllabus requirements](#)
- [Assessment policies and tools](#)

Course Approval & Curriculum

- [Course approval process overview](#)
- [Approved General Education courses \(catalog\)](#)

Assessment & Program Improvement

- [Assessment overview and policies](#)
- [General Education assessment reports](#)
- [General Education assessment rubrics](#)

Requirements & Student Pathways

- [General Education requirements overview](#)
- [Current General Education courses by LOPER category](#)

Governance & General Education Council

- [General Education Council webpage](#)
- [Council members](#)
- [Meeting agendas](#)
- [Past meeting minutes](#)
- [GEC bylaws](#)

Policies & Institutional Resources

- [UNK Academic policies handbook](#)
- [UNK Course Policies & Resources for syllabi](#)
- [Faculty & Advisor resources](#) from Academic Advising & Career Development office

Contact & Support

- [Contact the Director of General Education](#)