

History Department Response to the Ad-Hoc Committee on General Education

Do you believe General Education in its current form at the College effective in meeting the AAC&U learning outcomes? If not, please identify ways in which you think General Education could meet these outcomes more effectively.

On the whole, the General Education curriculum introduces students to the analytical, communication, information and quantitative skills and knowledge identified in the AAAC&U statement of outcomes. To their credit, departments which are directly responsible for General Education do carefully identify the goals and objectives of their particular courses. We would like to see greater dialogue and collaboration among departments who teach General Education courses. There need to be more planned opportunities for departments to share their General Education course goals and objectives. We want students to begin to integrate what they have learned, to make connections among disciplines, and to apply the skills and knowledge they have gained in each discipline. Many students do not understand the relationship between the General Education curriculum and a liberal arts and sciences education. Students too often see the General Education curriculum as a disconnected series of hurdles to be jumped.

Do you believe General Education in its current form help students to succeed in course work in your department's major or minor? Are there ways that General Education can enhance your student's work in the major and minor so that they meet the AAC&U learning outcomes more effectively?

The General Education curriculum certainly helps to prepare students for their move into the history major. However, we would like to see students come to the history major with better writing, quantitative, and analytical skills. A significant percentage of students do not have the reading comprehension skills necessary to understand primary and secondary sources. As stated above, departments that teach courses in General Education might wish to share their stated course goals and objectives with each other and engage in more collaborative efforts.

In light of these Learning Outcomes, we ask that you revisit the "Goals and Objectives for Disciplinary Requirements in Current General Education Curriculum" and describe any changes you think would improve/enhance General education at the College. We invite your department to give particular attention to the goals and objectives for any Gen Ed courses you currently provide.

History 101-102 or 103-104 provides the foundation stone for all students at the College of Charleston no matter what major or career they plan to pursue. Through the use of up-to-date textbooks and a set of collateral readings students are provided with the intellectual tools to gain

a perspective on and deeper understanding of the present. This is accomplished by introducing students to the concept of the long-range and thematic chronological framework. Within this framework students are introduced to a wide variety of different societies and cultures and examine how they develop and interact over time. In both core course sequences students gain historically informed intercultural knowledge in international contexts. Equally important, students learn about the diversity of historical experience, that the human past is made up of political, military, diplomatic, economic, social, cultural, religious, and intellectual history and the interconnections among them. They learn that the past has many voices and silences and that people live in historical contexts shaped by time and place.

Each core course engages students in a combination of written and oral assignments and collaborative work and exposes them to critical thinking skills and the method of historical analysis. Students learn the techniques of interpretation of primary sources which form the basis of historical knowledge. By critically analyzing the sources and traces left by people who have come before us the student better comprehends earlier eras of the human past and gains a better understanding of his or her place in the contemporary world.