

# Master List of Student Competencies for WSU's General Education Program (GEP) Goal Areas 1-10 and WSU Intensive Courses/Additional Graduation Requirements (effective Fall 2011)

WSU GEP Website: <https://www.winona.edu/gep/default.asp>

List of Currently Approved GEP Courses:  
<https://w3.winona.edu/publicreports/?reportname=Registrar%2fGEP+Accepted+Courses>

## Goal Area 1: Communication (7 S.H.)

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**Goal:** To develop writers and speakers who use the English language effectively and who read, write, speak, and listen critically. As a base, all students should complete introductory communication requirements early in their collegiate studies. Writing competency is an ongoing process to be reinforced through writing-intensive courses and writing across the curriculum. Speaking and listening skills need reinforcement through multiple opportunities for interpersonal communication, public speaking, and discussion.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Understand/demonstrate the writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing and presentation
- Participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding
- Locate, evaluate, and synthesize in a responsible manner material from diverse sources and points of view
- Select appropriate communication choices for specific audiences
- Construct logical and coherent arguments
- Use authority, point-of-view, and individual voice and style in their writing and speaking
- Employ syntax and usage appropriate to academic disciplines and the professional world

## Goal Area 2: Critical Thinking

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(This goal is fulfilled automatically when all of the other goal areas are completed.)

**Goal:** To develop thinkers who are able to unify factual, creative, rational, and value-sensitive modes of thought. Critical thinking will be taught and used throughout the general education curriculum in order to develop students' awareness of their own thinking and problem-solving procedures. To integrate new skills into their customary ways of thinking, students must be actively engaged in practicing thinking skills and applying them to open-ended problems.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Gather factual information and apply it to a given problem in a manner that is relevant, clear, comprehensive, and conscious of possible bias in the information selected

- Imagine and seek out a variety of possible goals, assumptions, interpretations, or perspectives which can give alternative meanings or solutions to given situations or problems
- Analyze the logical connections among the facts, goals, and implicit assumptions relevant to a problem or claim; generate and evaluate implications that follow from them
- Recognize and articulate the value assumptions which underlie and affect decisions, interpretations, analyses, and evaluations made by ourselves and others

### Goal Area 3: Natural Sciences (7 S.H.)

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Requires one course with lab and encourages courses from at least two different subject areas.

**Goal:** To improve students' understanding of natural science principles and of the methods of scientific inquiry, i.e., the ways in which scientists investigate natural science phenomena. As a basis for lifelong learning, students need to know the vocabulary of science and to realize that while a set of principles has been developed through the work of previous scientists, ongoing scientific inquiry and new knowledge will bring changes in some of the ways scientists view the world. By studying the problems that engage today's scientists, students learn to appreciate the importance of science in their lives and to understand the value of a scientific perspective. Students are encouraged to study both the biological and physical sciences.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of scientific theories
- Formulate and test hypotheses by performing laboratory, simulation, or field experiments in at least two of the natural science disciplines. One of these experimental components should develop, in greater depth, students, laboratory experience in the collection of data, its statistical and graphical analysis, and an appreciation of its sources of error and uncertainty
- Communicate their experimental findings, analyses, and interpretations both orally and in writing
- Evaluate societal issues from a natural science perspective, ask questions about the evidence presented, and make informed judgments about science-related topics and policies

### Goal Area 4: Mathematics/Logical Reasoning (3-4 S.H.)

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**Goal:** To increase students' knowledge about mathematical and logical modes of thinking. This will enable students to appreciate the breadth of applications of mathematics, evaluate arguments, and detect fallacious reasoning. Students will learn to apply mathematics, logic, and/or statistics to help them make decisions in their lives and careers. Minnesota's public higher education systems have agreed that developmental mathematics includes the first three years of a high school mathematics sequence through intermediate algebra.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Illustrate historical and contemporary applications of mathematical/logical systems
- Clearly express mathematical/logical ideas in writing
- Explain what constitutes a valid mathematical/logical argument (proof)
- Apply higher-order problem-solving and/or modeling strategies

## Goal Area 5: History and the Social and Behavioral Sciences (9 S.H.)

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Requires courses from at least two different subject areas.

**Goal:** To increase students' knowledge of how historians and social and behavioral scientists discover, describe, and explain the behaviors and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, events, and ideas. Such knowledge will better equip students to understand themselves and the roles they play in addressing the issues facing humanity.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Employ the methods and data that historians and social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition
- Examine social institutions and processes across a range of historical periods and cultures
- Use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories
- Develop and communicate alternative explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues

## Goal 6: The Humanities and Fine Arts (9 credits)

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Requires a minimum of 3 S.H. of Humanities and 3 S.H. of Fine Arts.

**Goal:** To expand students' knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behavior, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought. Through study in disciplines such as literature, philosophy, and the fine arts, students will engage in critical analysis, form aesthetic judgments, and develop an appreciation of the arts and humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of any society. Students should have experiences in both the arts and humanities.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities
- Understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within an historical and social context
- Respond critically to works in the arts and humanities
- Engage in the creative process or interpretive performance
- Articulate an informed personal reaction to works in the arts and humanities

**Fine Arts courses must also achieve the following additional student competency:**

- Employ the methods of an arts practitioner (including artist or scholar) in order to study or produce work that is created primarily for its aesthetic value

## Goal Area 7: Human Diversity (3 S.H.)

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**Goal:** To increase students' understanding of individual and group differences (e.g., race, gender, class) and their knowledge of the traditions and values of various groups in the United States. Students should be able to evaluate the United States' historical and contemporary responses to group differences.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Understand the development of and the changing meanings of group identities in the United States, history and culture
- Demonstrate an awareness of the individual and institutional dynamics of unequal power relations between groups in contemporary society
- Analyze their own attitudes, behaviors, concepts and beliefs regarding diversity, racism, and bigotry
- Describe and discuss the experience and contributions (political, social, economic, etc.) of the many groups that shape American society and culture, in particular those groups that have suffered discrimination and exclusion
- Demonstrate communication skills necessary for living and working effectively in a society with great population diversity

## **Goal Area 8: Global Perspectives (3 S.H.)**

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**Goal:** To increase students' understanding of the growing interdependence of nations and peoples and develop their ability to apply a comparative perspective to cross-cultural social, economic and political experiences.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Describe and analyze political, economic, and cultural elements which influence relations of states and societies in their historical and contemporary dimensions
- Demonstrate knowledge of cultural, social, religious and linguistic differences
- Analyze specific international problems, illustrating the cultural, economic, and political differences that affect their solution
- Understand the role of a world citizen and the responsibility world citizens share for their common global future

## **Goal 9: Ethical and Civic Responsibility (3 S.H.)**

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**Goal:** To develop students' capacity to identify, discuss, and reflect upon the ethical dimensions of political, social, and personal life and to understand the ways in which they can exercise responsible and productive citizenship. While there are diverse views of social justice or the common good in a pluralistic society, students should learn that responsible citizenship requires them to develop skills to understand their own and others, positions, be part of the free exchange of ideas, and function as public-minded citizens.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Examine, articulate, and apply their own ethical views
- Understand and apply core concepts (e.g. politics, rights and obligations, justice, liberty) to specific issues
- Analyze and reflect on the ethical dimensions of legal, social, and scientific issues
- Recognize the diversity of political motivations and interests of others
- Identify ways to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship

## **Goal 10: People and the Environment (3 S.H.)**

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**Goal:** To improve students, understanding of today's complex environmental challenges. Students will examine the interrelatedness of human society and the natural environment.

Knowledge of both bio-physical principles and socio-cultural systems is the foundation for integrative and critical thinking about environmental issues.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Explain the basic structure and function of various natural ecosystems and of human adaptive strategies within those systems
- Discern patterns and interrelationships of bio-physical and socio-cultural systems
- Describe the basic institutional arrangements (social, legal, political, economic, religious) that are evolving to deal with environmental and natural resource challenges
- Evaluate critically environmental and natural resource issues in light of understandings about interrelationships, ecosystems, and institutions
- Propose and assess alternative solutions to environmental problems
- Articulate and defend the actions they would take on various environmental issues

## Additional Requirement Categories

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Courses in all of the Additional Requirement Categories must demonstrate that they meet 100% of the specified student competencies.

## Intensives (12 S.H.)

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Intensive courses will normally be included as part of a student's major or minor program. Departments will need to demonstrate to the GEPS that the courses in question merit the designation as 'intensive.' Departments and programs should establish appropriate Goal Area prerequisites for intensive courses (e.g., an "Oral Communication Intensive" course should have a prerequisite of a *communication* course from Goal 1, Communications; a "Writing Intensive" course should have a prerequisite of a *writing* course from Goal 1, Communications). Departments may choose to require additional prerequisites for intensive courses. Students may use General Education Intensive courses to satisfy both Intensive requirements and major requirements.

## Writing Intensive (6 S.H.)

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**Goal:** The purpose of the Writing Intensive course requirement is to reinforce the student competencies specified for the writing component of Goal Area 1. These courses are intended to provide contexts, opportunities, and feedback for students writing with discipline-specific texts, tools, and strategies. These courses emphasize writing as essential to academic learning and intellectual development.

Courses can merit the Writing Intensive designation by demonstrating that section enrollment will allow for clear guidance, criteria, and feedback for the writing assignments; that the course will require a significant amount of writing to be distributed throughout the semester; that writing will comprise a significant portion of the student's final course grade; and that students will have opportunities to incorporate readers' critiques of their writing.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Practice the processes and procedures for creating and completing successful writing in their fields
- Understand the main features and uses of writing in their fields
- Adapt their writing to the general expectations of readers in their fields

- Make use of the technologies commonly used for research and writing in their fields
- Learn the conventions of evidence, format, usage, and documentation in their fields

## Oral Communication Intensive (3 S.H.)

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**Goal:** The purpose of the Oral Communication Intensive course requirement is to provide graduates of Winona State University the opportunity to enhance the knowledge and experience required to enable them to become highly competent communicators.

Courses can merit the Oral Communication Intensive designation by demonstrating that they allow for clear guidance, criteria, and feedback for the speaking assignments; that the course requires a significant amount of speaking; that speaking assignments comprise a significant portion of the final course grade; and that students will have opportunities to obtain both peer and faculty critiques of their speaking.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Earn significant course credit through extemporaneous oral presentations
- Understand the features and types of speaking in their disciplines
- Adapt their speaking to field-specific audiences
- Receive appropriate feedback from teachers and peers, including suggestions for improvement
- Make use of the technologies used for research and speaking in their fields
- Learn the conventions of evidence, format, usage, and documentation in their fields

## Mathematics/Statistics OR Critical Analysis Intensive (3 S.H.)

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Students will be required to take either a Math/Statistics or a Critical Analysis Intensive course. The student competencies for the two are listed separately below.

### Mathematics/Statistics Intensive

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**Goal:** The purpose of the Mathematics/Statistics Intensive course requirement is to reinforce some of the student competencies specified for Goal Area 4. These courses are intended to provide students with significant practice in applying prerequisite mathematical or statistical knowledge.

Courses can merit the Mathematics/Statistics Intensive designation if students will be required to make essential use throughout the semester of mathematical or statistical models appropriate to their prerequisite knowledge of those areas, and if the correct use of techniques based on such models will comprise a significant portion of a student's final grade. It is understood that mere rote computations, algebraic manipulations, or graphical design without inferential content would not merit a Mathematics/Statistics Intensive designation.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to:

- Practice the correct application of mathematical or statistical models that are appropriate to their prerequisite knowledge of those areas
- Make proper use of modern mathematical or statistical methods appropriate to their level of prerequisite knowledge, to include, if statistics is used in a substantive way, the use of a statistical package with graphics capability when appropriate

## Critical Analysis Intensive

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**Goal:** The purpose of the Critical Analysis Intensive course requirement is to provide an alternative to the Mathematics/Statistics Intensive requirement for students majoring in fields that do not require the significant use of mathematics or statistics. Critical Analysis Intensive courses are intended to provide students with significant practice in rigorous argument comparable to what a student is expected to receive in a Mathematics/Statistics Intensive course.

Courses can merit the Critical Analysis Intensive designation if students will be required to make essential use throughout the semester of proper techniques for analyzing the structure and validity of arguments, as opposed to techniques for examining the factual validity of, or the psychological or socioeconomic bases for, the premises of an argument; and if a significant part of their grade will depend on the proper use of such techniques.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to

- Recognize and evaluate appropriate evidence to advance a claim
- Apply critical analytical skills in making decisions or in advancing a theoretical position
- Evaluate alternative arguments, decision strategies, or theories within a systematic framework

## Physical Development and Wellness (2 S.H.)

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**Goal:** To provide students with fundamental knowledge and practical skills in the areas of lifetime physical activity, health awareness, and wellness. Wellness is a continual life-long process of individual self-discovery across a broad spectrum consisting of the emotional, environmental, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual dimensions. Such courses offer holistic experiences designed to foster an environment that provides opportunities for student refinement and balance of all dimensions through quality lifetime health, nutrition, fitness, leisure, and wellness habits.

**Student Competencies:** Students will be able to

- Make proactive choices that lead to a healthier lifestyle through increased knowledge of personal health, nutrition, fitness, leisure, and wellness
- Make critical decisions regarding leisure, health, nutrition, wellness, and disease-related issues throughout an individual's lifetime
- Define wellness as multidimensional and lifelong
- Utilize wellness activities to improve health, nutrition, physical activity, and leisure as well as provide relaxation, socialization, and balance in their lives
- Become accountable for personal health, nutrition, wellness, fitness, and leisure choices and the impact of those choices on self, others, society, and the environment