

Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee's Recommendations to the Faculty Senate: U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives Requirements

(Approved by the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee, 4/19/04.
7 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 absent)

The Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee (FSCC) recommends the changes to the U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives requirements that are presented in this document. Most of these recommendations originated with the *Ad Hoc* Diversity and International Perspectives Evaluation Subcommittee and were endorsed by the FSCC after thorough study of the *ad hoc* committee's October 21, 2002 report.¹ The FSCC's specific recommendations appear as numbered items below. Brief explanations are added where needed to establish the context of the recommendations.

The rationale for these recommendations is to strengthen aspects of the current requirements that were found to be deficient by the *ad hoc* committee's evaluation. In particular, the objective is to insure that students, in fulfilling the requirements, will have opportunities to critically examine diversity and international issues, as well as their own perceptions, values, and assumptions. To achieve this objective, these recommendations emphasize the clear articulation of goals and the assessment of student learning outcomes in courses used to fulfill the requirements. This emphasis is motivated, in part, by the Criteria for Accreditation of the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.² The FSCC believes that this emphasis is also consistent with the spirit of the "Policies and Procedures for Student Outcomes Assessment" approved by the Faculty Senate on May 10, 1991.³

The U.S. Diversity Requirement:

- 1.) Continue the U.S. Diversity requirement.
- 2.) Adopt the following learning outcomes expected from completion of the U.S. Diversity requirement and include them in the *ISU Catalog*.

Through completion of the U.S. Diversity requirement, students will achieve at least two learning outcomes such as those listed below.

Students will be able to:

- i. articulate how their personal life experiences and choices fit within the context of the larger mosaic of U.S. society, indicating how they have confronted and critically analyzed their perceptions and assumptions about diversity-related issues.

¹ The Evaluation Subcommittee's October 2002 report is available at <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~catalog/fsccl/usdivipreport.pdf>.

² For example, the Commission's "Criterion Three" includes the following "Core Component": "The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible." See "Restructured Expectations: A Transitional Workbook," <http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/restructuring/03Workbook.pdf>.

³ The 1991 Faculty Senate resolution is included as Appendix A to this document.

- ii. analyze and evaluate the contributions of various underrepresented social groups in shaping the history and culture of the U.S.
 - iii. analyze individual and institutional forms of discrimination based on factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, class, etc.
 - iv. analyze the perspectives of groups and individuals affected by discrimination.
 - v. analyze how cultural diversity and cooperation among social groups affect U.S. society.
- 3.) Require that a department proposing a course or experience explain how the course or experience will help students achieve at least two learning outcomes such as those listed above.
- 4.) Require that a department proposing a course or experience explain how the learning outcomes will be assessed, through assignments and/or examinations, during the course or experience.
- 5.) Continue to allow students to fulfill the U.S. Diversity requirement through approved non-course experiences.

The International Perspectives Requirement:

6.) Continue the International Perspectives requirement.

7.) Adopt the following learning outcomes expected from completion of the International Perspectives requirement and include them in the *ISU Catalog*.⁴

Through completion of the International Perspectives requirement, students will achieve at least two learning outcomes such as those listed below.

Students will be able to:

- i. analyze the accuracy and relevancy of their own worldviews and anticipate how people from other nations may perceive that worldview.
 - ii. describe and analyze how cultures and societies around the world are formed, are sustained, and evolve.
 - iii. analyze and evaluate the influence of global issues in their own lives.
 - iv. describe the values and perspectives of cultures other than their own and discuss how they influence individuals' perceptions of global issues and/or events.
 - v. communicate competently in a second language.
- 8.) Require that a department proposing a course or experience explain how the course or experience will help students achieve at least two learning outcomes such as those listed above.
- 9) Require that a department proposing a course or experience explain how the learning outcomes will be assessed, through assignments and/or examinations, during the course or experience.

⁴ These learning outcomes were adapted from Gray, K. S., G. K. Murdock, and C. D. Stebbins, "Assessing Study Abroad's Effect on an International Mission," *Change*, May/June 2002: 45-51.

10.) Continue to allow students to fulfill the International Perspectives requirement through approved experiences such as living in another culture through study abroad or internships. In these cases, approval should be given for the cultural experience rather than the work assignment or specific course(s) taken while in another country. For study or work abroad bearing Iowa State University credit, the international perspectives approval should be coordinated with other approval processes by the Study Abroad and Exchange Advisory Committee using guidelines developed by the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee.

Development and use of lists of approved courses:

The Faculty Senate's May 2, 1995 resolution creating the U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives requirements charged each department with the responsibility for "certifying that its students undertake, prior to graduation, the equivalent of at least 3 credits of course work or alternative academic experience in each of these areas."⁵ It was left to the individual departments, however, to propose the specific means that their majors were to use to fulfill the requirements. The original resolution anticipated that most departments would simply require their majors to take courses from approved lists. To expedite the process of reviewing and approving department-specific lists of courses, "master lists" of courses were developed with the understanding that certification standards based on departmental lists consisting of any subset of the master list were "pre-approved." In fact, the option to tailor a departmental list that consists of only some of the courses on the master list has rarely been exercised. In almost every undergraduate major, since the inception of the requirements, the master list of approved courses has constituted the *de facto* requirement in both the U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives areas.⁶

11.) Continue the current policy of permitting the faculty of an individual department or program to select from the master lists of U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives approved courses, those courses that will be accepted in fulfillment of the requirements by their majors.

12.) To implement the recommended learning outcomes in 2 and 7 above, new master lists of approved courses will be developed. Courses will be proposed for inclusion on the new lists by the offering departments or programs. Needless to say, courses on the current lists may be proposed for inclusion on the new lists. The final decision regarding inclusion of a proposed course on either the U.S. Diversity or International Perspectives master list will be made by the college curriculum committee of the department proposing the course and will be based on the extent to which the course addresses the learning outcomes listed above in recommendations 2 or 7. The FSCC will not play a direct role in the review and approval of course proposals. Each college will devise its own procedure for reviewing proposed courses. Once approved, each course will remain on the list unless significant changes are made to its content. In this instance, the department offering such a course is responsible for promptly notifying its college curriculum committee of such changes. At that time, the course's continued presence on the list will be re-evaluated.

13.) The Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee will develop a standard form to be used for proposing courses for the new master lists. The course proposal form will be the means of implementing recommendations 3 and 4 for the U. S. Diversity requirement, or 8 and 9 for the International Perspectives requirement, in that it will require that the proposing department or program explain how the course will meet the learning requirements of the example learning outcomes in paragraphs 2 and 7, and/or other learning outcomes proposed to be equivalent to them, and explain how the students' attainment of those learning outcomes will be assessed through assignments and/or examinations.

⁵ The 1995 Faculty Senate resolution establishing the U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives requirements appears as Appendix B to this document.

⁶ There are departments, however, in which advisors' counsel and peer influence are strong enough to insure that a particular course on the approved list is chosen by almost all of the department's majors.

14.) Once a course is approved by a college curriculum committee, the approved proposal will be forwarded to the Chair of the FSCC who will arrange for the proposal to be added to a publicly accessible, web-based file. Easy access to this information will facilitate informed decisions by departments about the courses they are willing to accept in fulfillment of the requirements by their majors.

Implementation details:

15.) If these recommendations for changes to the U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives requirements are approved by the Faculty Senate, the implementation schedule will need to include time for the preparation and review of proposals of courses meeting the new learning outcome and assessment requirements. The FSCC recommends that a full academic year be allowed, for this purpose, between Faculty Senate approval and the "implementation date."

16.) Courses currently on the approved lists will have to "reapply" for inclusion on the new master lists that will become effective on the implementation date. Their eligibility for use in meeting the new requirements will be judged on the basis of the learning outcome and assessment requirements set forth in these recommendations. Until the implementation date, the courses on the current lists will remain available for students' use in fulfilling the requirements. Once the Faculty Senate has approved these recommendations, however, college curriculum committees will begin using the standards established in these recommendations to judge all new course proposals. The FSCC expects that departments will propose courses for the new master lists sporadically beginning soon after Faculty Senate approval of these recommendations. College curriculum committees may review these proposals as they are made. If the proposals are approved, the courses will be added to the lists and become immediately available for use in meeting the requirements. However, college curriculum committees, at their discretion, may also choose to temporarily suspend review of course proposals until procedures for review subject to the new requirements can be developed. In any event, when the implementation date arrives, any courses on the current list that have not been re-approved for the new master lists will be dropped and will no longer be available for use in meeting the requirements.

17.) In the case of the U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives requirements, as with any graduation requirements, questions can arise about implementation details and students occasionally present justifiable grounds for waivers. Since the inception of the present requirements, the FSCC has developed answers to several common implementation questions and has established guidelines for handling waiver requests. After Faculty Senate approval of the present recommendations, the FSCC will conduct a review of the current "Implementation Policies" to determine if any modifications are needed.⁷ Generally speaking, however, it is the intent of the FSCC that the basic principles of the current Implementation Policies be preserved.

18.) The FSCC will conduct an overall review of the effectiveness of the U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives requirements, guidelines, and procedures to begin not later than five years after the implementation date of these recommendations.

⁷ The current Implementation Policies are available at <http://www.iastate.edu/~registrar/courses/div-guide.html>.