

The UMS General Education Transfer Block

A. Background

The University of Maine System Credit Transfer/General Education Workgroup (an ad hoc group with representation from all seven campuses) has developed a General Education transfer block standard in order to facilitate transfer within the University of Maine System, and to be extended in the near future to include community colleges and possibly other institutions in Maine. The block in this proposal is termed "the UMS General Education Transfer Block".

There is a great deal of variation in general education programs in the University of Maine System, which is a strength inasmuch as these variations reflect real differences in mission, and also optimization of local resources for student learning. In order to preserve and respect such differences, the block description includes only existing common outcomes, with the understanding that each local general education program will be more extensive and will include other outcomes.

We have used the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes as the general framework within which our General Education outcomes are aligned, because the Essential Learning Outcomes describe, at a very general level, a set of elements which every baccalaureate liberal arts education should include (although not all elements need be included as parts of an institution's general education program). The LEAP outcomes thus provide a common framework and common language for describing the alignment and formulating common outcomes in General Education programs across the University of Maine System.

The mapping of the General Education requirements of each of the UMS campuses against the LEAP outcomes may be found through the set of matrices published at <http://umaine.edu/facultysenate/files/2014/11/UMSGenEdOutcomesMatrices.pdf>

B. UMS General Education Transfer Block Process, Applicability and Definition

Students who have completed the UMS General Education Transfer Block at any UMS institution currently accredited by NEASC will be regarded as having completed all of their General Education requirements at every other UMS institution, except for up to ten credits of additional General Education coursework to be specified by the receiving institution. The additional coursework may be the same for all source institutions, or it may be different for different source institutions, but it must be the same for all students from the same source institution. As nearly as possible, policies should be arranged so that transfer students satisfy the same outcomes and proficiencies as native students.

The limitation of ten credits of additional coursework does not include major requirements (if any) that would normally be satisfied by specific general education courses, for native students.

Each faculty Senate (or that Senate's designee) in the University of Maine System will be responsible for defining their own institution's block (containing a minimum of 35 credits) for students transferring out, in accordance with the description below. Because each campus may have institution-specific requirements, the transfer-out block need not include an institution's entire general education program. Each institution will publish a description of its transfer-out block on their website, so that the other institutions in the general education transfer block agreement can determine which courses (if any) need to be taken in addition by students transferring from that institution to their own. When the registrar at a "sending" UMS institution certifies that a transferring student has completed the block at the sending institution, the "receiving" UMS institution will accept the block as degree credit, with at least 35 credits counting as General Education credits, as described above. While individual course equivalents will continue to be assigned to each transferable course, they will be applied as a block to the general education portion of an eligible student's degree audit. The faculty Senates of the UMS will reconsider this agreement on a regular basis, as described below, and will either continue, revise, or terminate the agreement, as it seems best based on the assessment and recommendations of a representative group similar to the group which created this proposal.

The *UMS General Education Transfer Block* is defined as follows:

1. It includes at least 35 credits of course work, with grades of C- or better in all courses.
2. Its outcomes align closely with the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes.
3. Its outcomes include all of the following content (although not necessarily using this language) with the understanding that each institution's general education will undoubtedly contain many more outcomes. These outcomes are common to all University of Maine System campuses, and are expected to be included in each institution's transfer-out block:

1. Creative/Arts:

Students will experience a sustained engagement with at least one of the creative or performing arts, and will be able to participate in, identify, or evaluate artistic and creative forms of expression.

2. Natural Science:

Students will demonstrate both conceptual and practical understanding of scientific method, including the abilities of hypothesis development and testing through observation or experiment, and evaluation of results. Students will engage in laboratory or field work at a level consistent with standard college laboratory and field courses.

Students will demonstrate the ability to work with both qualitative and quantitative information in applying the scientific process.

2. Writing:

Students will be able to write clear, coherent texts with adherence to proper mechanics. Students will be able to adapt their writing appropriately for different disciplinary contexts or audiences. Students will be able to effectively use writing as a means to engage in and communicate processes of critical inquiry, including analysis, synthesis, and argumentation.

4. Quantitative Literacy:

Students will be able to reliably perform mathematical operations at the college level. Students will be able to understand and evaluate quantitative information both in their college work and in broader public discourses. Students will be able to apply mathematical concepts and techniques in practical situations, to solve problems.

5. Diversity/Cultural Knowledge:

Students will demonstrate knowledge of cultural differences.

6. Humanities:

Students will be able to analyze or interpret significant texts or other cultural artifacts. Students will be able to understand or think critically about meaning (significance) and value, from either an aesthetic, philosophical, literary, or multidisciplinary perspective.

7. Social Sciences:

Students will be able to analyze or explain causal forces which shape social structures, institutions, or behavior. Students will demonstrate knowledge of multiple cultures.

8. Ethical Reasoning:

Students will demonstrate the ability to do one or more of the following:

- understand social and cultural value systems;
- understand and evaluate ethical perspectives on environmental issues;
- understand and critically evaluate ethical theories or concepts;

- work effectively with ethical issues and theories through analysis and evaluation of the theoretical, literary, historical or artistic texts through which fundamental ethical ideas and problems are presented.
- critically evaluate disciplinary claims in the context of ethical, social, and environmental issues.

C. Block Transfer Evaluation and Revision/Block Transfer Committee

A committee composed primarily of faculty, with representation from every UMS system campus, will meet starting at the beginning of the third year in which block transfer is in force to evaluate block transfer and recommend to the system faculty senates whether to continue, revise, or terminate the block transfer agreement. Records will be kept by each campus regarding which students transfer either in or out under the block transfer agreement, so that data regarding those students can be collected and analyzed by the committee. By the end of the third year, each faculty senate will vote regarding whether to continue, revise, or terminate the block transfer agreement. If any faculty senate does not vote on this issue, that senate will be regarded as having voted for termination of the agreement at their campus.