

High-Impact Practices subcommittee report 2020-01-31

Guidelines for the GE Theme courses and high-impact practices

The General Education Program proposal delineates a model wherein students have the option to satisfy the Theme components by taking **“either a) one high-impact 4-credit course...or b) two 3-credit courses each individually offered by a single department, but with the requirement that the two courses come from different disciplines.”**

The GE proposal goes on to recommend the following kinds of 4-credit High Impact Practice courses, each with specific rubrics and guidelines: **Interdisciplinary Team-taught courses; Community-based Learning** (aka Service-Learning); **Study Away; Research or Creative Practice courses;** and **World Language Instruction** of Theme-relevant content.

We understand that a primary charge of our subcommittee is to define and refine these 4-credit courses and their implementation.

How were the “high-impact” practices selected?

One issue we had to address was the use of the term “High Impact” or “High Impact Practices” (HIP) for this GE category. The GE proposal motivated a reduced credit-hour footprint of the Themes by requiring those courses to adopt a “high profile and high impact” course approach. More than ten years after a seminal publication by Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) on high-impact practices, there is now a rather extensive literature on high-impact practices and student outcomes. That literature now recognizes 11 types of education practices as ‘high-impact’ (see Sidebar). Our

High-Impact Educational Practices (AAC&U, 2010)

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- ePortfolios
- Learning Communities
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Internships
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Capstone Courses and Projects
- Undergraduate Research

committee initially considered all of these practices as potential GE Theme pedagogies but recognized a few issues with that approach. First, the kinds of courses chosen originally to feature in the 4-credit GE Theme courses (listed above) do not map precisely onto what is currently regarded as “high-impact practices”. Nor is team-taught interdisciplinary courses specifically identified as a “high-impact practice”. Also, some “high-impact practices” – such as first-year seminars, both in the new GE and existing offerings, and the proposed ePortfolio “Bookend” – exist elsewhere in the new curriculum. Furthermore, a key take-away from the existing literature on what makes those educational practices truly high-impact is the quality of the instructional process. While each specific practice has some unique criteria and theoretical foundations for what makes them particularly effective, three basic principles can help us design and evaluate truly high-impact

student experiences across all types: 1) intentional engagement of students, 2) consistent interaction with peers and faculty, and 3) sufficient opportunities for group-based and individual reflection (Brownell & Swaner, 2010¹).

In light of this, we recognize that the Theme courses should not be the only place for high-impact practices. Rather, the new 4-credit Theme courses are a key element of a curriculum-wide and comprehensive implementation of high-impact practices in the new GE curriculum, where these courses implement a few select, signature, integrative learning experiences. We propose that we refer to these simply as “Integrative Theme Courses” that include the interdisciplinary team-taught courses, community-engaged learning (service-learning), study away, research or creative practice, and world-language instruction of theme courses. All of these will combine conventional classroom instruction with multiple areas of knowledge or modes of inquiry, guided by the three principles of intentionality, interaction and reflection to provide a high-impact learning experience. The overarching goal is helping students build an advanced and in-depth thematic understanding of societally important topics by synthesizing perspectives from multiple disciplines or modes of inquiry, or by transferring learning to new, complex situations.

We would still encourage the integration of other kinds of “High-Impact Practices” into the 4-credit theme courses, and across the curriculum. In fact, the offices of Undergraduate Education, and Academic Enrichment in particular, will be encouraging the use of “High-Impact Practices” across the entire undergraduate curriculum, including other parts of the GE.

What distinguishes the 4-credit and 3-credit hour courses in the themes?

All students must complete both the required Theme, “Citizenship for a Diverse and Just World,” and also choose a second theme from among the options “Lived Environments,” “Health and Wellbeing,” “Sustainability,” or an additional theme or themes to be developed. They can meet any theme course requirement either by taking *one* 4-credit integrative course in the theme or *two* 3-credit theme courses, with the proviso that the two must be in different disciplines. In the following section we delineate the distinctive characteristics of and requirements for the 4-credit and 3-credit theme courses.

Four-credit integrative theme courses:

The integrative course designs meet the spirit of the 4-credit theme course criteria by virtue of the fact that they integrate multiple areas of knowledge and modes of inquiry: team-taught (typically taught by instructors from different disciplines); education away (including Education Abroad as well as domestic educational travel experiences); community-engaged learning (service-learning); research or creative practice (which could entail a writing component that situates the inquiry in a broader thematic and societal context); theme content taught in a non-English language. In the case of team-taught courses, a clear articulation of the interdisciplinary nature of the course should be included in the course proposal (see the language used in the ASC interdisciplinary team-teaching grant CFP as a starting point for definitions and requirements). In the case of all integrative courses, they should ensure high profile and high impact by employing the three main principles of **intentionality**, **interaction**, and **reflection** as follows:

¹ Brownell, J. E., & Swaner, L. E. (2010). *Five high-impact practices: Research on learning outcomes, completion and quality*. Association of American Colleges and Universities.

1. Transparent **intentionality** of learning engagement, requiring courses to...
 - a) be transparent to learners about learning goals, how they connect across courses, the GE and their program goals, so students can make sense of discrete pieces;
 - b) have an articulated learning progression that ensure that students can scaffold knowledge by taking learners from where they are through increasingly higher levels of understanding and advanced skills, both inside a course and for the whole curriculum;
 - c) have relevance to students' lives - either by virtue of the contemporary or enduring nature of the topic/theme, or a student's personal connection with the topic/theme.
2. Consistent and meaningful **interaction** with people that come from different backgrounds and can provide multiple perspectives, requiring that...
 - a) faculty provide frequent feedback on student performance, mentoring, as well as oversight of learning activities;
 - b) any activity in the community (locally or abroad) is inclusive where instructors model respectful engagement and may involve partners as co-educators;
 - c) Interaction with people of different backgrounds is used as a learning resource to enlarge students' understanding of subject matter and different perspectives
3. Consistent opportunity for group-based and individual **reflection**, requiring learners to ...
 - a) Debate possible solutions to challenges presented in the learning experience
 - b) Engage in structured reflection and writing on course content in relation to self, others and larger society
 - c) Transfer existing knowledge to new contexts and open-ended, unscripted problems
 - d) Connect and combine new knowledge gained from course/program with existing knowledge/experiences, and assess their own knowledge development as appropriate for the course/activity

In addition, all integrative courses must meet these general requirements:

- Must meet requirements for formal instructional hours for a 4-credit course. (ODHE defines a semester credit hour as equivalent to “750 minutes of formalized instruction that typically requires students to work at out-of-class assignments an average of twice the amount of time as the amount of formalized instruction”). Practically, at OSU, this typically means teaching four 55-minute class sessions per week, or two 80-minute class sessions plus one 55-minute session per week, or an equivalent amount of formalized instruction, wherein some of this time (e.g., a 55-minute class session per week) may be a recitation or lab.
- The course must clearly be focused on the selected theme and fulfill both the goals and ELOs specific to that theme, as well as the general themes Goals and ELOs listed below.
- Team-taught courses must be taught collaboratively by faculty who integrate distinctly separate disciplines, model interdisciplinary academic exchange, and demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of the course. OR Other types of integrative courses must clearly integrate and demonstrate multiple modes of instruction, whether via community-engaged learning with a community partner, education away, research or creative practice, or foreign language instruction of the theme content.

Three-credit theme courses:

- The three-credit theme courses must meet requirements for formal instructional hours for a 3-credit course. (ODHE defines a semester credit hour as equivalent to “750 minutes of formalized instruction that typically requires students to work at out-of-class assignments an

average of twice the amount of time as the amount of formalized instruction”). Practically, at OSU, this typically means teaching three 55-minute class sessions per week, or two 80-minute class sessions. Any lab or recitation sessions must be built into the instructional time delineated here.

- The course must clearly be focused on the selected theme and fulfill both the goals and ELOs specific to that theme, as well as the general themes Goals and ELOs listed below.
- Three-credit theme courses will typically be taught by a single instructor from a single discipline. We would encourage instructors to identify for the registrar another course on the same theme from a different discipline that would complement their course and we would encourage advisors to help students make appropriate and meaningful selections of complementary courses in their chosen theme.
- Although the 3-credit theme courses are fundamentally stand-alone courses from within a faculty member’s discipline, we encourage faculty to integrate some connection (through an assignment, short discussion in a lecture, or other approach) to another complementary discipline.

Ideally, we would like to promote the 4-credit integrative theme courses as a distinctive, signature feature of OSU’s new General Education model. Therefore we would like to make these courses available to as many students as possible; but practically speaking we understand that, initially at least, we will not be able to create enough of these 4-credit courses to accommodate every undergraduate student at the university, so the 3-credit courses function, in part, as a practical (and immediate) option. The 3-credit courses also allow programs to overlap a theme course with their major program requirements, while such students will still be required to take a second 3-credit theme course in a different discipline. Thus, the two 3-credit course option will also provide both students and departments with a needed degree of flexibility in the implementation of the GE.

[How do I integrate the high-impact practices into a new or existing course?](#)

Ohio State has excellent faculty, lecturers, graduate assistants who deliver quality teaching every day. However, these new GE theme courses offer a new and challenging modality that most of us have had only limited exposure to and practice with. We propose that any instructor developing or teaching a GE-authorized integrative theme course be required to have adequate training and support in the respective pedagogies to ensure maximum impact and benefit for the students. This could be accomplished in a variety of ways that are already common practice at Ohio State. For example, we could mandate a half or full day workshop not only for discussing and sharing best practices in teaching the theme and specific practice, but also for stimulating cross-disciplinary discussion of the theme and potential match-making, whereby instructors of complementary 3-credit theme courses could coordinate and perhaps collaborate in converting their separate courses into a 4-credit interdisciplinary team-taught course. Our Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP) successfully conducts similar faculty workshops to disseminate curriculum guidelines and allows for exchange between faculty and experts. Another model for more in-depth professional development has been the Service-Learning Course Design Institutes jointly offered by UITL and the Office of Academic Enrichment. Tracking of instructor competencies could be facilitated through the endorsement model currently managed by UITL.

For the implementation we suggest a committee of faculty experts, students and relevant support offices (e.g. Service-Learning, Education Abroad, Undergraduate Research & Creative Inquiry) to oversee the development, approval, and assessment of integrative and high-impact principles for GE Theme courses and instructor support. This could be complementary to, or integrated with, any theme-specific steering committees that oversee the disciplinary content within themes and could follow a similar curricular approval process that is currently used for S- and H-designation courses. We anticipate immediate formation of the proposed committee and five practice-specific workgroups to develop final versions for all five types of integrative theme courses. This committee will be directly supported by the Office of Academic Enrichment, the Office of International Affairs, and other units as appropriate. As an example of resulting guidelines that can help faculty and departments to develop these integrative theme courses we provide the appendix “DRAFT Integrative Thematic service-learning course requirements” that aligns with current criteria for community-engaged learning courses in the current General Education option category (see appendix below).

Barriers and incentives

Integrative courses are often under-enrolled by students with economic challenges. For example, Education Away can be costly and Community-Engaged Learning requires transportation. To ensure that all students can participate equally in integrative courses, the University needs to dedicate resources to lower the barriers of access.

To encourage faculty participation in these collaborative and impactful courses, we suggest that teaching a 4-credit interdisciplinary team-taught course count as 3 credit hours in the workload of each of the two faculty members. An added challenge is the typically smaller size of integrative courses. To make this cost-effective for Departments/Schools, the revenue stream needs to be equally divided between the home units of the two faculty regardless of how students register, and the fiscal impact of smaller course size need to be addressed in policies for tuition revenue.

Similarly, we would argue that several other integrative course pedagogies require substantially more planning and logistics (e.g. study away and service-learning) and therefore warrant some form of added incentive or compensation for departments/instructors. Also, several integrative course activities rely on meaningful partnerships where everyone involved can advance their goals. Building and maintaining such relationships requires an investment of time and attention to key [partnership principles](#).

General Themes Goals and ELOs	
Goals	Expected Learning Outcomes
GOAL 1: Successful students analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than the foundations.	Successful students are able to ... 1.1 Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme.
	1.2 Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or idea of the theme.
GOAL 2: Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections across disciplines or between out-of-classroom experiences and academic knowledge and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.	2.1 Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to the theme.
	2.2 Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.

Appendix

Draft 4-cr integrative service-learning theme course request form

Please complete this form and attach it to your Course Request or Course Change Request when you request the Integrative Theme Course designation. If you have questions or need more information, please contact

All Integrative Theme Courses should ensure high profile and high impact by employing the three main principles of **intentionality**, **interaction**, and **reflection**. Specifically, an effective service-learning course should include the following core features:

- Connection of service to academic learning
- Analysis of connection between academic content and service
- Mutual benefit for all involved
- Student preparation and support
- Plan for evaluation
- Plan for sustainability

COURSE CONTENT/PLANNING

1. Please describe the planned service activities to be performed by students in this course.
2. Please describe how the planned service activities reflect priorities and stated goals/needs of the community partner(s).
3. Service-Learning activities are all based on an agreement between three parties, each of whom has specific goals/expectations/responsibilities that are necessary to make a service-learning experience effective. For example, instructors should model respectful engagement with outside partners and the community, and the course should involve partners as co-educators to the extent possible. Goals and objectives should also be shared with students to help provide context in relation to their other courses, the GE, and relevant program goals.

Please describe goals/expectations/responsibilities for:

- a) Faculty
- b) Students
- c) The community partner(s)

4. Please describe your plans for sustainability and departmental support for offering this service-learning course on a continuing basis.

COURSE GOALS

5. How does the service activity connect with the academic content of the course, and how is this content in turn enhanced by the service component of the course?
6. How do the activities, content, and connections progress to ensure students scaffold knowledge to increasingly higher levels of understanding and advanced skills?

7. In addition to course-specific student learning goals, the following learning outcomes are defined specifically for students in Service-Learning courses:

- Students make connections between concepts and skills learned in an academic setting and community-based work.
- Students demonstrate an understanding of the issues, resources, assets, and cultures of the community in which they are working.
- Students evaluate the impacts of the service-learning activity.

The following questions will help ensure that the proposed course meets those outcomes as well as the Expected Learning Outcomes for Theme Courses:

- a) How does the course promote a comprehensive exploration of issues and ideas before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion? (ITC ELO 1.1)
- b) What aspects of the course ensure that the students learn about the issues, resources, assets, and cultures of the community in which they are working? (ITC ELO 1.2)
- c) What processes are in place to allow students to reflect on and make connections between academic content and community-based work? (ITC ELO 2.1)
- d) How does the course promote reflection on and evaluation of the impacts of the service learning activity and consideration of other possible approaches to the challenges addressed in this course? (ITC ELO 2.1)
- e) How will reflection opportunities be structured to encourage students to connect and combine their existing knowledge with new experiences and learning as it relates to themselves, others, and larger society? (ITC ELO 2.2)

GE Assessment Plan

Measuring student learning outcomes can take many different approaches. For example, you may measure student success in achieving identified outcomes through written papers, embedded test questions, pre- and post-tests, reflection journals, discussions, successful completion of a specified product, focus groups, interviews, and observations.

As a direct measure of assessing how effectively students are meeting the Service-Learning ELOs, instructors are required to give students an end-of-course assignment that should be scored using the Scoring Rubric provided below. This assignment is required for assessment purposes; the instructor may choose to include this assignment as one of the assignments a student completes for his/her final grade.

8. Please describe how student learning, with respect to the goals in #7 above, will be assessed in this course.

9. Once you collect the data on student achievement, how will you use it to make course improvements?

10. How will the information be archived and made available to future instructors?

Within a month of completing the class, please submit a summary of rubric scores using the table provided, one paragraph of instructor reflection (which may include instructor's explanation of student scores, qualitative analysis of student growth and development, changes to be made in the course, etc.), and three sample

assignments (one low score, one average score, and one high score) to the ASC Curriculum and Assessment Services electronically (keep copies for your own and your department's records).

Further details about end-of-course assignment:

All instructors of GE Service-Learning courses are required to give an end-of-course assignment that measures how well students are achieving the Expected Learning Outcomes. The point of requiring such an assignment for all GE Service-Learning courses is to help university committees evaluate the effectiveness of the GE Service-Learning Category as a whole, and as a new option in the GE.

The assignment should assess all four of the General Themes Goals and ELOs. Here is an example of a prompt for an end-of-course student reflection paper:

Please write a thoughtful four-page (double-spaced, typed) reflection paper that addresses the following aspects of your Service-Learning experience:

1. Articulate your understanding of [list key course issues, topics or ideas] by providing your own selection and synthesis of relevant information, acknowledging the influence of context and assumptions (see scoring rubric ELO 1.1 a-c)
2. Articulate your understanding of the issues, resources, assets, and cultures of the community in which you worked. (see scoring rubric ELO 1.2)
3. How are the concepts and skills that you have learned in an academic setting connected to your community-based work? (see scoring rubric ELO 2.1)
4. Evaluate the impacts of the service-learning activity. Use concrete examples (see scoring rubric ELO 2.2).

The Scoring Rubric for this end-of-course assignment is included below.

Scoring Rubric:

	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
ELO 1.1 Successful students are able to engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme by... a) articulating topics or ideas	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
b) selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts and professionals are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts and professionals are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts and professionals are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts and professionals are taken as fact, without question.
c) acknowledge influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.

<p>ELO 1.2</p> <p>Successful students are able to demonstrate an understanding of the issues, resources, assets, and cultures of the community in which they are working.</p>	<p>Articulates a thorough and complex understanding of the issues, resources, assets, and cultures of the community in which they are working.</p>	<p>Identifies and clearly understands the issues, resources, assets, and cultures of the community in which they are working.</p>	<p>Identifies the issues, resources, assets, and cultures of the community in which they are working.</p>	<p>Shows minimal awareness of the issues, resources, assets and cultures of the community in which they are working.</p>
<p>ELO 2.1</p> <p>Students make connections between concepts and skills learned in an academic setting and community-based work</p>	<p>Connects, analyzes, and extends knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from course content to Service Learning activity.</p>	<p>Connects and analyzes knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from course content to Service Learning activity.</p>	<p>Begins to connect knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from course content to Service Learning activity.</p>	<p>Student expresses a limited, unclear connection of course content to Service Learning activity.</p>
<p>ELO 2.2</p> <p>Students evaluate the impacts of the service learning activity.</p>	<p>Student thoroughly evaluates the impacts of the Service Learning experience on themselves, the organization, and also considers the long term impact of the work on the community.</p>	<p>Student evaluates the impacts of the Service Learning experience on themselves and the contributions that they made to the goals and aims of the organization.</p>	<p>Student evaluates the impacts of the Service Learning experience on themselves.</p>	<p>Student minimally evaluates the impacts of the Service Learning experience.</p>

Assessment of Service Learning GE Courses

This scoring rubric is designed to help instructors and members of relevant committees assess how well students are meeting the ELOs as reflected in end-of-course reflection assignments. Students are not expected to have acquired all the knowledge, skills, and attitudes/perspectives listed under the various ELOs in order to complete the assignment satisfactorily. At a minimum, students are expected to meet Milestone 2.