

### 2.7.3

In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. **(General Education)**

As documented in the USC Columbia *Academic Bulletin*, the existing general education program requires a minimum of 30 credit hours and is a substantial component of each baccalaureate degree. The curriculum requires at least one course from three areas of study and therefore ensures breadth of knowledge. Individual colleges and departments determine which courses meet general education requirements. The Compliance Certification Report suggests that the general education learning outcomes published in the academic bulletin are what provide coherence to the curriculum, although this is unclear.

However, USC is in the process of significantly revising its general education curriculum for baccalaureate programs. The new "Carolina Core Curriculum" is anticipated to be implemented in fall 2012. The Off-Site Review Committee's review of the various working documents of the Carolina Core Committee, the committee charged with overseeing the development of the new curriculum, found that USC has begun articulating a coherent rationale for the new curriculum with well-defined learning outcomes that clearly map onto requirements and core areas. The rationale clearly aligns with the institution's mission. The process for the review and approval of courses proposed for inclusion in the new general education curriculum has yet to be determined, but will involve approval by the Carolina Core Committee and the Faculty Senate Committee on Curriculum. This would appear to be another improvement from the existing general education curriculum, which seems to lack coherence from the perspective of course offerings.

The associate degree programs of the regional campuses are not addressed in the Compliance Certification Report. The Off-Site Review Committee's review of the academic bulletins of the regional campuses revealed different sets of learning outcomes for the associate degrees. While these degrees appear to require a minimum of 15 semester hours drawn from humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics, there does not appear to be a coherent rationale supporting the general education course requirements. Indeed, it is unclear if the learning outcomes specified for the associate degrees are also the learning outcomes for the general education component of the degrees. It is also unclear how the new general education curriculum will affect the requirements and learning outcomes for associate degrees.

The On-Site Review Committee found, as documented in the USC Columbia Academic Bulletin, the existing general education program requires a minimum of thirty credit hours and is a substantial component of each baccalaureate degree. Further, the web sites for all Lancaster, Salkehatchie, Sumter, and Union campuses document offering associate degree programs with general education requirements that exceed fifteen credit hours and are also a substantial component of each associate degree. General education programs were always found to include a course from each required area listed in the core requirement.

At the baccalaureate level, USC has been working to redefine general education since 2005 and plans to begin their new general education program in 2012. At this point, they have developed their distribution requirements and are in the process getting ready to select specific courses for the new "Carolina Core Curriculum" for general education. The work on the new core curriculum is impressive, pending the final steps for the revision.

At the time of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review, the Committee was unsure of the "coherence" of the general education course requirements for the associate degree programs. The On-Site Review Committee examined the associate degree curricula for the "coherence" of the general education requirements through their examination of all associate degree curriculums and their interviews during the branch campus visits and concluded that the general education requirements for the associate degree was "coherent."