

Guidance from University Faculty Senate and Faculty Council of Community Colleges to Campuses on Approving Courses for the DEISJ Requirement

(currently for A.A., A.S., and Baccalaureate degrees)

Recognizing that campuses are in different stages of the governance process in developing and approving courses for the new SUNY GE category of Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (DEISJ), University Faculty Senate (UFS) and Faculty Council of Community Colleges (FCCC) wish to offer best practices guidance for faculty governance bodies in charge of evaluating courses for approval in this category.

In keeping with established practice, as well as expectations from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), a course must clearly address and assess the learning outcomes of the target category for it to be approved. The same applies to the knowledge and skills category of DEISJ. According to the Student Learning Outcomes for this category, students will:

- describe the historical and contemporary societal factors that shape the development of individual and group identity involving race, class, and gender;
- analyze the role that complex networks of social structures and systems play in the creation and perpetuation of the dynamics of power, privilege, oppression, and opportunity; and
- apply the principles of rights, access, equity, and autonomous participation to past, current, or future social justice action.

Faculty on each SUNY campus, through faculty governance structures, will determine how best to meet and assess the required learning outcomes in courses approved to fulfill the DEISJ category. This is consistent with the 1967 statement endorsed by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), “faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction...faculty sets the requirements for the degrees offered in courses, determines when the requirements have been met...”.

Below are suggestions for how to proceed, structured as an FAQ.

Does the course meet the SUNY GE learning outcomes for the category and are those learning outcomes foundational to the course?

DEISJ must be foundational to the course. Thus, content and learning activities of courses approved for the DEISJ knowledge and skills category must have significant course content and learning activities that explore race, class, and gender identity as these three core identities provide a baseline framework for this outcome.

To that end, in fulfilling the learning outcomes for the DEISJ category, courses must explicitly address how institutional and societal structures lead to inequities across groups. Further, students must be given opportunities to apply a social justice

framework to the analysis of the questions of identity and equity that arise from the first two learning outcomes.

Do the faculty proposing the course have the background and experience necessary to teach it?

For courses that are approved to meet the DEISJ requirement, faculty who develop and teach such courses need to have sufficient subject matter expertise to be able to address all of the learning outcomes for the category in substantial measure. According to the NYSED Codes, Rules, and Regulations, faculty expertise is “demonstrated by training, earned degrees, scholarship, experience, and by classroom performance or other evidence of teaching potential, their competence to offer the courses and discharge the other academic responsibilities which are assigned to them.”

In submitting their course proposal to the faculty governance body, faculty members may submit a CV to highlight their qualifications beyond earned graduate degrees, such as substantial social justice experience in a community-based organization or relevant publications and presentations. Faculty may also demonstrate the requisite expertise via a comprehensive course outline or syllabus with a Bibliography/Works Cited as part of the course submission.

Can a course be approved in the category of DEISJ and in another SUNY GE category?

Yes, per the SUNY General Education Framework (SUNY GE) FAQ, Procedural Guidance: [SUNY General Education Framework \(SUNY GE\)](#)

“Campus faculty will determine whether a course satisfies student learning outcomes in multiple categories. A course approved in multiple categories must contain sufficient content to address all of the learning outcomes for each category, and should have an assessment plan to evaluate student attainment of all of the learning outcomes for each of the multiple categories. The campus shall ensure sufficient breadth in its general education program(s).’ (Implementation Guidance A.iv.) Where there is considerable overlap in content, assigning multiple GE categories is a reasonable solution, particularly in programs with credit constraints”.

Just like any other SUNY GE category—bearing in mind that the learning outcomes both in DEISJ and the other GE category must be foundational to the course.

Does the DEISJ category strictly limit the content to questions concerning matters of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice within the United States?

No. While the primary focus of courses in the new category may be on diversity, identity, and social justice in the United States, that does not prevent an approved course in the category from situating the history, current circumstances, and critical issues of diversity, identity, and social justice in the U.S. in relation to what has happened and is the current state of matters elsewhere. Moreover, one can imagine how theory and criticism rooted outside the United States could help guide faculty and students in addressing and thinking about diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice in the United States.

Can the required Diversity: Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice knowledge and skills area be infused in a set of courses or across a program?

While DEISJ content will exist across many courses and programs, most campuses will need to make significant changes to existing curriculum to have courses that fulfill the DEISJ learning outcomes. Moreover, since students need to complete courses prior to transfer or graduation, it is our recommendation that DEISJ content be housed in a single course.

When creating plans where individual DEISJ learning outcomes are distributed among multiple courses within a program, each of the student learning outcomes must be met for the category to be met.

Further, plans should demonstrate how each learning outcome is foundational to the specific course(s) in which it is included, and how each learning outcome and the category as a whole will be assessed as part of the general education category.

Moreover, plans should make it clear how students will transfer into and out of the campus consistent with the goal of seamless transfer, which is to enable students to complete their intended program of study on time, without unnecessary cost and/or duplication of effort.

What guidance can you offer when it comes to assessing student learning outcomes in this category?

As with any other category, a framework for assessing student learning outcomes should ideally be part of the initial course approval process. Student learning outcomes in this category are focused on development of discrete cognitive knowledge. Your assessment plan should involve students' ability to describe, analyze, and apply various conceptual frameworks.

Will there be a rubric available for assessing student learning outcomes in this category?

A University Faculty Senate (UFS) Task Group, Faculty Council of Community colleges (FCCC) Academic Affairs Committee, and the SUNY Council on Assessment (SCoA) have jointly developed a sample rubric to serve as guide, which is posted to the SUNY General Education framework page and the SCoA website. Campuses may use this rubric as a starting point to develop local assessment processes for assessing student learning outcomes in this category, but should not feel constrained to use this sample rubric if they already have local campus assessment tools in place or under development.

Plans will vary, of course, but faculty may want to keep in mind the different levels of Bloom's taxonomy for cognitive thinking (describe, analyze, apply), as they develop their plan and rubric. You should re-evaluate your assessment plan for the student learning outcomes periodically. Courses approved for the DEISJ category should develop course-specific formulations of these outcomes at an appropriate level for the course being offered, providing a baseline framework to allow students to generalize these principles to courses across their program of study.

Finally, just a friendly reminder that when reviewing courses for *any* GE category, faculty governance bodies should minimally consider the following:

- Does the course meet the SUNY GE learning outcomes of the category (or categories) for which it is being proposed?
- Does the course meet the NYSED definition of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS)?
- Do the faculty proposing the course have the credentials/background/experience necessary to teach it?
- How will the SUNY GE learning outcomes be assessed?
- Courses approved for general education categories are guaranteed to transfer to other SUNY institutions; given this, will the course have credibility with other SUNY institutions?
- How do the course learning outcomes map to program learning outcomes and/or institutional learning outcomes? If the current general education learning outcomes are also being used as institutional learning outcomes, how will the ILOs need to be revised?