GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Role in a Liberal Arts Education

The Preamble (http://www.umt.edu/catalog/acad/genreq/default.html) to the General Education section of the UM 2013-14 Catalog (emphasis added) states:

“The University of Montana-Missoula's General Education Program provides a broad academic base that supports both undergraduate learning at The University of Montana-Missoula and continued learning following graduation. While the General Education Program offers students considerable flexibility in selecting courses, it has a set of common educational objectives for all students.

“In accordance with the mission of The University of Montana-Missoula, these objectives are to develop competent and humane individuals who are informed, ethical, literate, and engaged citizens of local and global communities. Students should become acquainted with issues facing contemporary society, participate in the creative arts, develop an understanding of science and technology, cultivate an appreciation of the humanities, and examine the history of different American and global cultures. Upon completion of the general education requirements students should be able to articulate ideas orally and in writing, understand and critically evaluate tangible and abstract concepts, and employ mathematical and other related skills appropriate to a technologically focused society.

“In summary, the General Education Program is designed to provide a high quality intellectual foundation that accommodates all UM students whether in liberal arts or professional programs. This foundation will be reinforced, expanded, and refined as students continue through their course of study. Students are encouraged to prepare for productive roles in their chosen fields by cultivating civic awareness vital to the greater community and a democratic society. The acquired skills will allow students to examine critically the human experience and achieve genuine confidence in their knowledge and abilities. For the General Education Program to accomplish its goals, students must assume primary responsibility for their growth and education.”

Some students will benefit from having an academic advisor discuss the importance and relevance of the General Education Requirements (GERs). The GERs are sometimes perceived as extra requirements, separate from the important work of the major. Students select what they consider the “least objectionable” option from a list of course names; the decision sometimes relates more to the day, time and professor than the actual subject matter. Other students will sometimes comment they don’t have a major yet, so they’ll just take Gen Eds. Left to their own devices, two years down the road those students will have completed their GERs and still have no idea about a major!

Encourage your students to keep track of their credits - how many they need, how many they’ve attempted, and whether any restrictions apply (repeatability, technical credits, HHP/ACT limits). All baccalaureate students need a minimum of 120 credits, some will need more.
Students will typically follow your lead when you discuss the GERs. If you present them as an added burden, students will view the GERs as exactly that. On the other hand, if you talk about GERs as a mechanism for gaining knowledge and skill sets needed for life and a competitive job market, that same student will enthusiastically engage in the academic planning process. Conversations about GERs can often be a platform for a broader discussion of a student’s goals for their undergraduate experience.

2. Basic considerations

All students must complete the full set of general education requirements (GER) in effect at their original matriculation date. Caveats and small print:

- If a new set is adopted after their initial enrollment, students may elect to follow the newer requirements but may not use a combination of two systems of GERs.
- Students may use different catalogs for their major and GERs only if the original date of matriculation is prior to Autumn 2013.
- The course must be listed in the catalog corresponding to the year in which the course was taken, not the student’s catalog year, to meet a General Education Requirement.
- If a student’s enrollment is not continuous, he or she may follow the catalog in effect at the time of the original enrollment, provided the student can graduate within six years of that catalog. Policy http://www.umt.edu/catalog/acad/gradreqs/default.html.
- Transfer students using a set of requirements other than that of the original matriculation date should work with Enrollment Evaluations to make sure their catalog designations are correctly reflected in Banner (Catalog Date can been viewed in the UAdvise screen).
- Coursework used to satisfy the 39 Upper Division requirement may be taken for Cr/NCr and must earn a passing grade (Cr or D- or higher).

Coursework to be applied towards the GERs must be taken for a traditional letter grade; the earned grade must be a “C-” or higher. Exceptions:

- Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate credits listed as “Cr*” (see list at http://admissions.umt.edu/admissions/freshman/advanced-credits).
- Coursework taken at an institution that uses Cr/NCr instead of a traditional letter grading system AND a grade of “Cr” is equivalent to a C- or higher.
- The student has been granted an exception by the Graduation Appeals Committee.

3. Proficiencies

The three broad areas in which a student must demonstrate proficiency are Writing, Math and Modern and Classical Languages/Symbolic Systems. They require demonstrated skill rather than a specific number of credits.

Writing: The writing requirement consists of three components, an English composition course, an approved writing course, and the Upper Division Writing Expectation for the major. Some of the trickier aspects of this series include:

- WRIT 101 was formerly known as ENEX 101. A student with a grade of C- or higher in ENEX 101 does not need to retake WRIT 101.
- A transferred course of fewer than 3 credits will satisfy the requirement if it is posted to the UM transcript with an equivalent of WRIT 101.
- Approved writing courses must be taken at UM. Courses taken elsewhere may transfer for degree credit, but will not satisfy the writing requirement without authorization from the Writing Committee (see http://www.cas.umt.edu/english/composition/transfers.cfm).
- Transfer students who enter UM with MORE THAN 27 degree credits are exempt from the Approved Writing requirement. If the student attended UM, left and did 28 credits somewhere else before returning to UM, he or she needs to complete the Approved Writing Requirement.
- Students may not use a course from the Upper Division Writing Requirement list to satisfy the Writing Approved requirement.
- Some of the courses listed as “Approved Writing” are upper division (300 or higher) but do not meet the Upper Division Writing Requirement.

Mathematics- All students, irrespective of major, must earn a grade of C- or higher in one of the following: M 104, 105, 115, 118, 121, 122, 135, 151, or a 3-credit math course for which one of the listed courses is a pre-requisite. Students may also use various CLEP or AP tests, or the Mathematical Literacy Examination administered by the Department of Mathematical Sciences. Some of the finer details:

- The ALEKs placement test is for placement only and does not exempt a student from the math requirement.
- If a student enters UM with a course posted as an equivalent to one of the math courses listed above, or with a designation of “M TR1M,” the math requirement has been met irrespective of the number of credits (e.g., 2.66 credits of TR1 M is sufficient).
- Math skills tend to erode quickly if not used regularly. It is in a student’s best interest to satisfy the math requirement early in his or her college career. University policy (see http://www.umt.edu/catalog/acad/genreq/default.html) dictates that:

  “Students must complete the mathematical literacy requirement by the time they have earned 30 credits; if not, they must register for a mathematical sciences course every semester until they have completed the requirement. Because many other courses at the university assume some mathematical literacy, it is strongly recommended that all students complete their mathematical literacy requirement as soon as possible.”

Modern and Classical Languages/Symbolic Systems- Students entering UM prior to Autumn 2009 could elect to take either a foreign language (FL) or symbolic system (SS) to satisfy this General Education Requirement (note this is the GER only, and does not consider major requirements). Beginning Autumn 2009, individual majors are designated as either “FL” or “SS.” Specific courses or course sequences are listed in the catalog. Items of note:

- FL majors must complete the second semester of a language (third if the language is Irish) or demonstrate equivalent skill in any of the languages listed in the student’s governing catalog.
- Passing a proficiency test administered by the Modern and Classical Languages Department does not result in degree credit.
- If a student completes two majors, the FL or SS requirement is determined by the first major unless the second major requires completion of FL or SS as a part of the major
requirements. For example, if a student double majors in Psychology and English, the student will need both FL and SS coursework.

- Some majors require completion of a FL and courses typically used for SS (e.g., Physics and Communicative Sciences and Disorders).
- The FL/SS requirement is scheduled to change starting Autumn 2015. All students will need to demonstrate foreign language proficiency unless their major requires more than 48 credits (exclusive of General Education Requirements) and has been granted an exception by the Faculty Senate.

These are *minimum requirements*. Many students will benefit greatly from additional writing, math and language study. For example, additional language fluencies can increase students’ options for international study and/or employment, and their competitiveness for scholarships and graduate/professional study. Ideally, the advisor will work with students to determine educational and professional goals to develop comprehensive academic plans.

### 4. Perspectives

Perspectives give breadth to the undergraduate experience. They expose a student to fields of study beyond the major and help achieve our goal of educating “informed, ethical, literate and engaged citizens of local and global communities” (taken from the Preamble referenced earlier). There are eight categories; students need a minimum of 3 credits in all but the Natural Sciences, where six credits (including one lab) are needed. Some courses may satisfy more than one Perspective.

### 5. Worksheets

The worksheets are designed for the student to track their GER progress. A KPCN video that guides the student through the GER review is available on YouTube (http://www.umt.edu/uac/audiences/GERfall09.php).

- Autumn 2009-present (http://www.umt.edu/uac/Files%20and%20Forms/GER%20F09.pdf)
- Autumn 2005-Summer 2009 (http://www.umt.edu/uac/Files%20and%20Forms/GER%20A05-SUM09.pdf)

### 6. Course Listings

Course designations change over time. The course must be listed as meeting a particular Perspective in the catalog in effect when the course was taken. The catalog year "starts" with the Autumn semester and "ends" with the following summer. A grade of C- or higher is required on all GERs. A grade of “Cr” cannot be used unless the course was taken at an institution where the course was only offered on a Cr/NCr basis. The links below are to the University Requirements section of the last five UM catalogs.

- 2012-2013 http://archive.umt.edu/catalog/12_13/acad/genreq/default.html
- 2010-2011 http://archive.umt.edu/catalog/10_11/acad/genreq/default.html
7. Transcript Review

Every advisor has his or her unique “best practices” for transcript review. A unit’s documentation practices can also influence how reviews are done, if a student receives a copy, or whether a copy is retained by the unit. If your unit doesn’t have the authorization to print transcripts, ask the student to download a copy from CyberBear before the scheduled appointment. Some key elements include:

- For transfer students, check to see if there is an “AA Degree- Lower Div GEN ED Met” notation. This will simplify the process considerably. If notation is missing but the student has 60+ credits from a two year school, ask if the AA was awarded. The student should speak to Admissions-Evaluations in Griz Central to have the degree posted.
- Watch for coursework coming in from schools on a quarter or trimester schedule. These will often be reflected as non-whole numbers. A student needs at least 3 credits in each Perspective (6 for Natural Sciences).
- Grade check. Did the student earn a C- or better? If the course is in progress, a reminder that C- is the minimum grade is in order.
- Repeatable and non-repeatable courses. Cross-listed courses can be the most difficult to identify.
- Credit limits. Although we do not limit the number of Activity courses a student can take, only 4 credits may be applied to the 120 credits needed for graduation. All credit limits are listed on the back-side of the GER Worksheets.
- Count total credits and Upper Division credits. Calculate how many credits are still needed in each category.

Majors, minors and options are noted on a student’s transcript, specializations are not. Talk with students about what they hope to accomplish by having additional credentials. The student may also need to speak with a Financial Aid counselor about the implications of additional credits or semesters.