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GEN ED AT UHM

This chapter provides an overview of the current General Education (Gen Ed) program at UH Mānoa: features, requirements for students, and text from the foundational document approved by the Board of Regents and Mānoa Faculty Senate.

Through the efforts of the faculty, UHM's Gen Ed program was last significantly reformed in 1999 and approved by the Mānoa Faculty Senate in 2000. It has remained largely unchanged since its implementation in 2001 and includes four sets of requirements: Foundations, Diversification, Focus, and Hawaiian/Second Language.

Gen Ed Requirements

Below are the General Education requirements as described in the [2024-25 UHM Catalog](#).

To obtain an undergraduate degree from UH Mānoa, a student must satisfy: (a) General Education requirements, (b) requirements of the student's college or school, and (c) requirements of the student's specific academic major. Consulting the college/school advising office can help a student select courses that simultaneously satisfy more than one requirement. This section describes the four components of the UH Mānoa General Education requirements:

1. **Foundations**
2. **Diversification**
3. **Focus**
4. **Hawaiian or Second Language**

Foundations and Diversification together are UH Mānoa *Core* requirements. Focus and Hawaiian or Second Language together are UH Mānoa *Special Graduation* requirements.

Students who transfer to UH Mānoa having completed the Foundations requirements at another UH System school are considered to have fulfilled UH Mānoa Foundations requirements. Students who transfer to UH Mānoa having completed the Diversification requirements at another UH System school are considered to have fulfilled UH Mānoa Diversification requirements. Finally, students who transfer to UH Mānoa having completed both the

Foundations and the Diversification requirements at another UH System school are considered to have fulfilled the UH Mānoa Core¹ (Foundations and Diversification) requirements.

A grade of D (not D-) or higher is required for a course to fulfill General Education requirements at UH Mānoa. The Credit/No Credit option is not allowed for any course taken to fulfill a General Education requirement, with the exception of those courses offered only for CR/NC.

1. Foundations Requirement: 12 credits

The Foundations requirements are intended to give students skills and perspectives that are fundamental to undertaking higher education. Students should complete the Foundations requirements during their first year at UH Mānoa. Courses taken to fulfill the Foundations requirements may not be used to fulfill Diversification or Focus requirements. [For more information about the Foundations requirements, proposal process, and approved courses, see Chapter 4.]

- **Written Communication (FW): 3 credits**

Written Communication (FW) courses introduce students to the rhetorical, conceptual, and stylistic demands of writing at the college level. Students receive instruction in composing processes, search strategies, and how to access and use various types of primary and secondary materials.

- **Quantitative Reasoning (FQ): 3 credits**

The primary goal of Quantitative Reasoning (FQ) courses is to develop mathematical reasoning skills at the college level. Students apply mathematical concepts to the interpretation and analysis of quantitative information in order to solve a wide range of problems arising in pure and applied research in specific disciplines, professional settings, and/or daily life.

Since Fall 2018, Quantitative Reasoning (FQ) has been a Foundations requirement, replacing Symbolic Reasoning (FS). Students who entered the UH System *prior to Fall 2018 and have been continuously enrolled* should refer to their original catalog year requirements or speak with a school/college advisor if they are interested in taking an FQ rather than an FS course. Note that FS designated courses were offered through summer 2023 to accommodate those students, but are no longer available.

- **Global and Multicultural Perspectives (FG): 2 courses, 6 credits**

Global and Multicultural Perspectives (FG) courses provide thematic treatments of global processes and cross-cultural interactions from a variety of perspectives. Students will trace human development from prehistory to modern times through examination of narratives and artifacts from diverse cultures. At least one component of each of these courses will involve the

¹ UH Hilo also has ["Structural" requirements](#), in addition to Foundation and Diversification requirements, in their Gen Ed Core.

Indigenous cultures of Hawai'i, the Pacific, and Asia. To satisfy this requirement, students must take a total of six credits; the six credits must come from two different groups/time periods.

For Non-UH System Transfer Students Only

Students who transfer from a non-UH System school with one or more western or world civilization courses will be required to take only three credits of Foundations-Global and Multicultural Perspectives. If the course or courses taken are time-period specific, the credits taken at UH Mānoa must cover a different time period, corresponding to FGA, FGB, or FGC.

2. Diversification Requirement: 19 credits

The Diversification requirements are intended to ensure that every student has exposure to different domains of academic knowledge, while at the same time allowing flexibility in choice of courses for students with different goals and interests.

- **Arts, Humanities, and Literatures (DA, DH, DL): 6 credits**

To satisfy this requirement, students must take six credits; the six credits must include two of the three different areas: Arts "DA," Humanities "DH," and Literatures "DL."

- **Social Sciences (DS): 6 credits**

To satisfy this requirement, students must take a total of six credits from two different departments.²

- **Natural Sciences (DB, DP, DY): 7 credits**

To satisfy this requirement, students must take three credits in Biological Science "DB," three credits in Physical Science "DP," and one credit of Science Laboratory "DY."

Students can complete the Diversification requirements over the full four years of their academic program. Students may satisfy the Diversification requirements by taking approved courses for which they meet course prerequisites. Some courses that satisfy Diversification requirements may also simultaneously satisfy Focus and/or major requirements, as shown in the following table.

² Some departments have multiple course alphas. Students who take their two DS courses from the same department but with different course alphas are considered to have fulfilled the DS requirement. For example, the Family and Consumer Sciences Department offers two course alphas: Human Development & Family Studies (HDFS) and Fashion Design and Merchandising (FDM). A student who takes HDFS 230 and FDM 200 is considered to have fulfilled the DS requirement.

Can a single course satisfy more than one requirement?						
Requirements	Hawaiian/ Second Lang	Foun- dations	Diversifi- cation	Focus	Major	Minor/ Certificate
Hawaiian/ Second Lang	–	no	no	YES	YES*	YES*
Foundations	no	–	no	no	YES	YES
Diversification	no	no	–	YES	YES	YES
Focus	YES	no	YES	–	YES	YES
Major	YES*	YES	YES	YES	–	no
Minor/ Certificate	YES*	YES	YES	YES	no	–

**Double dipping major, minor, and certificate courses is allowed for language courses used to meet the HSL requirement. Schools/colleges can determine whether or not they will allow double dipping of HSL culture substitution courses with major, minor, and/or certificate requirements.*

Students with interests in a particular topic also have the option to choose from the subsets of courses that are part of six Thematic Pathways in General Education, posted on the Gen Ed website at <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/gened/pathways/>. Students do not have to choose all of their courses from a pathway. These lists are intended to help students identify courses that may align with their interests.

3. Focus Requirements

The Focus requirements identify important additional skills and knowledge necessary for living and working in diverse communities. Courses fulfilling Focus requirements are offered in departments across the curriculum and vary each semester. To meet a Focus requirement, a course must have an official UH Mānoa Focus designation during the semester in which it is taken. Courses taken outside the UH System cannot be used to fulfill Focus requirements. Instead, non-UH System transfer students' Focus requirements are adjusted according to the number of credit hours awarded by UH Mānoa for their non-UH System courses. (See chart on the next page.)

- **Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Issues (H or HAP): 1 course, any level**

These courses focus on issues in Native Hawaiian and Asian or Pacific cultures and history; they promote cross-cultural understanding between nations and cultures.

- **Contemporary Ethical Issues (E or ETH): 1 course, 300- or 400-level**

These courses involve significant readings on, and discussion of, contemporary ethical issues; they give students tools for the development of responsible ethical judgments.

- **Oral Communication (O or OC): 1 course, 300- or 400-level**

These courses provide students with training in oral delivery and give them the opportunity to do individual and/or group oral reports and other, disciplinary-specific modes of oral communication.

- **Writing Intensive (W or WI): 5 courses, including at least two at the 300- or 400-level**

These courses collectively help students both to learn course content and to communicate through writing. Small writing-intensive classes, in which instructors work with students on writing related to course topics, are offered in nearly all departments.

Students who transfer credits from a non-UH System institution may have adjusted (“prorated”) Focus requirements. The adjustment is based on the number of non-UH System transfer credit hours accepted **when a student is admitted to UH Mānoa as a degree-seeking student**. Non-UH System credits completed while an active UH Mānoa student are not included in proration (summer courses, Study Abroad, National Student Exchange, etc.).

Number of accepted non-UH credit hours:	Focus Requirement			
	W	H	E	O
0-36	5*	1	1	1
37-54	4*	1	1	1
55-88	3*	1	1 E or 1 O	
89+	2*	1	0	0

*At least two “W” courses must be numbered at the 300- or 400- level.

Exemption from a Focus Requirement

Students who have engaged in one or more extraordinary educational experiences that took place outside of the ordinary university curriculum may request exemption from up to three Focus requirements that are directly related to the educational experience(s). To earn exemption, students must demonstrate to the General Education Committee that the experience(s) fulfilled the goals of the requested Focus area(s). Approved exemptions reduce the number of courses required for the approved Focus area(s); however, they do not reduce the total number of credit hours needed to graduate. Students are limited to three exemptions. Restrictions apply. For more information, consult a College/School academic advisor or visit <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/gened/students/exemptions/>

4. Hawaiian or Second Language Requirement

Knowledge of a second language encourages deeper awareness of the structure of language and its relation to thought. It develops sensitivity to other ways of ordering personal experience and social institutions, provides a direct way of comparing another culture to one's own, and provides insight into the workings of one's native language.

Before graduation, students must show competence at the 202 (or equivalent) level in Hawaiian or a second language by doing one of the following:

- a. Completing a four-semester sequence (usually 101, 102, 201, and 202) in a single language.
- b. Demonstrating competence by taking a UH Mānoa language-competency exam if one is offered. Check with the language department in question.
- c. Receiving a language-requirement waiver by demonstrating 202-level second language competency. For example, waivers may be given to students who are native speakers of a language other than English.

Important Note: The Hawaiian or Second Language requirement has been modified or waived for students in the following Colleges/Schools: Shidler College of Business; College of Education; College of Engineering; John A. Burns School of Medicine; Nancy Atmospera-Walch School of Nursing; School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology; Thompson School of Social Work & Public Health; College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources. (See <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/gened/req/hsl/> for additional information.) Students in these Colleges/Schools should consult a College/School advisor.

Credits for Previous Language Experience

All students (including native speakers of a language) with experience in a language other than English may earn "back credits." These students may take any UH Mānoa language course, appropriate to their level, in which there is significant use of that language. ("Appropriate level" of a language will be determined by placement exam, department policy and/or the department's director or advisor. "Significant use" of a language will be determined by the course content.) Upon completion of this course with a letter grade of C (not C-) or better, students may receive 3-16 back credits. The course must be the *first* Hawaiian or second language course taken since high school; and must be taken for a letter grade, not CR/NC. Other restrictions apply. For example, Hawaiian language back credits are earned according to specific program policies. Please check with the appropriate language department for details and forms. See the full policy (M5.403 Hawaiian/Second Language Requirement Waivers) on the [OVPAE Policies webpage](#).