

# HARVARD COLLEGE

## PROGRAM IN GENERAL EDUCATION



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Dear GSGE faculty,

To help you make the most of your GSGE, we have collected ideas from colleagues who have previously taught GSGEs and subsequently proposed and taught Gen Ed courses. Drawing from discussions with GSGE faculty and from our experience supporting both GSGEs and Gen Ed courses, we have compiled the teaching tips below. Please note that these are in *draft* form – and so we welcome your feedback, as well as your suggestions for additional tips you might wish to share.

Finally, remember that all GSGEs should aim to achieve at least some of the following:

- Develop a draft Gen Ed proposal for the undergraduate course
- Develop a draft syllabus for the proposed Gen Ed course
- Identify course materials and readings to use in the undergraduate course
- Develop lecture materials (e.g. PowerPoint slides) and section materials (e.g. handouts)
- Develop assignments and grading criteria/rubrics
- Train graduate students to be the first corps of Teaching Fellows for the course

Please be in touch with questions and concerns as they arise. After all, it's our job to offer whatever support we can as you develop and lead your GSGE, and propose and teach your Gen Ed course.

Best,  
Stephanie & Ned

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Administrative Director, Program in General Education

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### **COLLEGIAL TIPS FOR GSGEs**

- [Designing GSGEs](#)
  - Articulate at the outset what you want students to learn from the undergraduate course and why this course is an important curricular contribution to Gen Ed
  - Develop assignments for the graduate students that help generate useful pedagogical materials for the undergraduate course
  - Workshop pedagogical materials
  - Create a collegial seminar environment
  - Take advantage of the expertise of Gen Ed's Instructional Support Services Team
  - Hire an administrative TF or research assistant to help you with your GSGE
- [Recruiting students for your GSGE](#)
- [Proposing a Gen Ed course](#)
- [Recruiting TFs for your Gen Ed course](#)

## **COLLEGIAL TIPS FOR GSGES**

### **Designing GSGEs**

GSGE faculty have stressed the importance of explicitly discussing the course development process with their seminar students, and consistently working with them to translate what they are learning about the seminar topic into how they would teach it.

- **Articulate at the outset what you want students to learn from the undergraduate course and why this course is an important curricular contribution to Gen Ed**

Spending time at the beginning of the term thinking through what you want students to be able to learn and do at the end of the Gen Ed course can help guide the entire course design process and ensure that course lectures, activities, assignments and assessments are all designed with these goals in mind. Explore with your GSGE students what makes the undergraduate course a good fit for the Gen Ed program and for the particular category you want it to fulfill.

- **Have your students read about Gen Ed.**

Ask them to read the [General Education Review Committee's \(GERC\) Final Report](#) and learn about the [Program Renewal](#). The GERC Final Report outlines the rationale and goals for the revitalized curriculum, while Program Renewal describes the new College requirements.

- **Have the Gen Ed Program's Administrative Director and the Gen Ed Committee's Faculty Chair come talk with your students about the program.**

Stephanie and Ned would be happy to come to a seminar meeting to talk with your students about the Gen Ed Program. Please contact Gen Ed Program Coordinator Mia Metivier ([mmetivier@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:mmetivier@fas.harvard.edu) or 617-495-4692) – well before the start of the term, if at all possible – for assistance scheduling their classroom visit.

- **Gen Ed syllabus statement**

Ask your students to draft a clear and compelling explanation for *why* the undergraduate course belongs in Gen Ed. This statement should communicate how the course meets the broad goals of the Program. (The Program in General Education asks that every Gen Ed course include, in a prominent place in its syllabus and on its website, such a statement and that faculty address this topic repeatedly with students over the course of the term. When faculty propose a Gen Ed course, they are asked to include such a statement in their draft syllabus.) Contact Gen Ed Associate Director Laura Hess ([laurahess@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:laurahess@fas.harvard.edu)) for more information or for sample statements.

- **Develop assignments for the graduate students that help generate useful pedagogical materials for the undergraduate course**

Some GSGE faculty have used seminar assignments to produce materials they could later use to develop the undergraduate course. These assignments have also provided students with important pedagogical training. Examples include:

- **Literature reviews and suggested course readings**

Ask students to conduct broad literature reviews on various topics and produce annotated bibliographies explicitly addressing the appropriateness of each item for teaching undergraduates. You might require that students identify an appropriate textbook and/or draft a schedule of course readings. This can help you explore new areas and identify appropriate readings for your Gen Ed course.

- **Course syllabus**  
Ask students to develop a draft syllabus for the undergraduate course. Some GSGE faculty have given students the option of working individually or together, either in pairs/small groups or as a whole class. You are welcome to share with your students the Gen Ed syllabus checklist appended to these tips. You may find it helpful to have a representative from the [Bok Center](#) come lead a syllabus workshop for your students.
- **Teaching unit**  
Ask students to develop a unit of the course, identifying readings, creating assignments, and drafting and delivering lectures with visual aids and/or interactive components. It can be productive to critique these lectures as a group and consider alternative pedagogical strategies and teaching techniques.
- **Assignments & assignment guides**  
Ask students to design assignments (including draft assignment guides and grading rubrics) for the proposed undergraduate course. You may wish to capitalize on graduate students' expertise in areas beyond yours and develop assignments you might not otherwise have been able to design on your own. Asking your students to complete some or all of the assignments will provide helpful feedback on how well the assignments are designed. Members of Gen Ed's [Instructional Support Services Team](#) (described in detail below) can help your students develop assignments and writing guides. The [Harvard Writing Project](#) can help your seminar students develop effective ways of assigning and responding to student writing, the [Harvard College Library](#) can support them in teaching students how to find and work with sources, and the [Bok Center](#) can guide them in designing assignments and developing grading rubrics. These units can work with your seminar students to develop an assignment guide, which would direct undergraduates to appropriate research tools and encourage better writing by giving practical advice and useful examples, all tailored specifically to your new course. If you are interested, please contact Gen Ed Associate Director Laura Hess ([laurahess@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:laurahess@fas.harvard.edu)), who is happy to coordinate the work of these units for you.
- **Course website**  
Ask students to work together to develop a course website. The [Academic Technology Group](#) is happy to work with your students on this.
- **Course trailers**  
You could ask students to work individually or in small groups to create short videos that could be posted on the course website to advertise the course to students. These trailers would provide your students with a useful exercise in extracting and communicating the essence of the course and considering how to make it of general interest to students, and could also provide you with useful material for the new course. (Please note that Gen Ed is longer able to provide course trailers for you.)
- **Workshop pedagogical materials**  
Consider building into your seminar opportunities for seminar participants to present various pedagogical materials and get peer feedback. Some have divided their three-hour weekly class into a two-hour seminar followed by a practicum where they regularly workshop teaching materials. Others have had students present either at several points during the term or at the end of the term.
- **Create a collegial seminar environment**  
You may find it productive to establish with students at the outset of the seminar that they are full collaborators in the course design process and to encourage them to question and even

challenge you throughout the process. Inviting and encouraging graduate students to contribute as equal colleagues can help you produce a more carefully thought out course.

- **Take advantage of the expertise of Gen Ed's Instructional Support Services Team**  
Gen Ed's [Instructional Support Services Team \(ISST\)](#) stands by ready to support you as you develop and teach your GSGE. Comprised of representatives from the Bok Center, Harvard Writing Project, Harvard College Libraries, Academic Technology Group, Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, and some of the University Museums, the ISST offers a range of services to support both GSGEs and Gen Ed courses. Members of the team are prepared to offer workshops that could be incorporated into GSGEs or used to augment them. For example, the Bok Center could lead a workshop on syllabus design, the Harvard Writing Project could do a session on designing and responding to writing assignments, the Library could present on designing research assignments, and Academic Technology could talk about designing a Canvas site or using technology to enhance teaching and learning. Contact Gen Ed Associate Director Laura Hess ([laurahess@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:laurahess@fas.harvard.edu) or 617-495-3002) to explore how the ISST can be of assistance.
- **Hire an administrative TF or research assistant to help you with your GSGE**  
To provide additional logistical or administrative assistance for your seminar, GSGEs are provided with an administrative teaching fellow or research assistant. Funding for this position is split between GSAS and regular TF funding. Please have your local departmental administrator contact Belinda Chu at GSAS ([bchu@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:bchu@fas.harvard.edu) or 617-495-9148).

#### **Recruiting students for your GSGE**

- **Look beyond your department**  
As you prepare to teach your GSGE, you may wish to advertise the seminar beyond your department, division or the FAS. Given the interdisciplinary and sometimes extradisciplinary nature of Gen Ed, you may find that having students from a variety of disciplines can enrich the seminar and help you develop your undergraduate course. Colleagues and DGSs in other departments may be able to help you recruit students. The Gen Ed office is happy to help advertise GSGEs to Gen Ed TFs from the current academic year.
- **Consider admitting advanced undergraduates**  
Some GSGE faculty have found it helpful to have advanced undergraduates participate in the seminar, since they are able to provide an undergraduate perspective on the undergraduate course that is being developed. (Please note that undergraduates will not receive Gen Ed credit for participating in these seminars.)

#### **Proposing a Gen Ed course**

- **Allow time between your GSGE and your Gen Ed course**  
Faculty who have taught GSGEs find that it takes considerable time to digest what they learned from the GSGE. Preparing a thorough proposal for the Gen Ed committee to review and finalizing the syllabus and assignments for the undergraduate course may take longer than you think. Our experience to date indicates that you should plan for at least a term, if not a full year, between the term you offer your GSGE and term you plan to teach your Gen Ed course.
- **Anticipate that the Gen Ed course proposal process can often take several months**  
Before you submit a proposal, you should plan to meet with Ned and Stephanie to discuss the course and its fit for the Program. [Learn more about the course proposal process.](#)

- **Suggestions to keep in mind as you draft a syllabus for your Gen Ed course proposal**
  - Be explicit about your expectations of students
  - Provide students with early and frequent feedback
  - Scaffold assignments over the course of the semester
  - Offer a cumulative, synthetic final assignment
  - Require revision of at least one piece of written work
  - Include a Gen Ed statement in your syllabus

#### **Recruiting TFs for your Gen Ed course**

- **Recruit TFs from among your GSGE students**

Although it is not always possible for various reasons to have GSGE students serve as TFs for the Gen Ed course, faculty have found that this continuity can be invaluable.

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