



## Skills-based General Education

The state of New Mexico recently implemented a [new model for general education](#) (GE) that emphasizes the development of five transferable, essential skills that all college graduates need for success:

- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Personal and Social Responsibility
- Information and Digital Literacy

Descriptions of each skill and its components are given in the [Essential Skills Rubrics](#). All NMSU “G” courses have now been certified under the new model and should be taught in accordance with the state’s essential skills criteria. This document provides broad guidance on NMSU’s expectations for essential skills instruction and assessment.

## Disciplinary Content and Essential Skills

The new state model is still organized around content areas, with some changes from the previous model. (See the NMSU Implementation section below for details.) Typically, a course’s catalog description and student learning outcomes (SLOs) emphasize discipline-specific content and skills. This information is now documented for most lower-division courses in the [New Mexico \(Common\) Course Numbering System](#) (NMCNS).

The goal for instructors teaching under the new GE model should be to intentionally integrate essential skills instruction and assessment into the disciplinary context of their course. GE Certification documents, available [here](#) for all courses, may be a helpful resource to instructors. They include narrative descriptions (Section D) and a sample assignment (Appendix) designed to illustrate\* how a course might introduce, reinforce, and assess essential skills.

*\*The assignment and narratives are illustrative, not prescriptive.*

## Syllabus Requirements

All syllabi should include course SLOs. Courses that are listed in the [NMCNS](#) must include all SLOs listed by the state for that course. The state rules allow for institutions/instructors to add additional SLOs as long as the added SLOs constitute no more than 20% of the total number of SLOs. (Note: Essential-skill SLOs, described below, may be added if desired and do not count toward this 20%.)

All “G” course syllabi should include a statement such as:

All general education courses are required to include instruction and evaluation of a variety of essential skills. There are three such skills associated with this course:



## Teaching “Essential Skills” in General Education Courses

- (List the three skills here. Courses must teach the skills specified for their content area as listed in the State Model Overview section below.)

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Instructors may also choose to include summary descriptions of essential skill components (as, for example, on the cover page of the [Essential Skills Rubrics](#)) or create and provide essential-skill SLOs that align with those descriptions. Essential-skill SLOs should be identified as such and do not count toward the 20% limit on additional SLOs described above.

### State Model Overview

- Full information on the state model is available on the HED Webpage: [https://hed.state.nm.us/resources-for-schools/public\\_schools/general-education](https://hed.state.nm.us/resources-for-schools/public_schools/general-education)
- Emphasizes 5 “essential skills”

- Communication
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Personal and Social Responsibility
- Information and Digital Literacy
- Critical Thinking

- Organized around 6 content areas:

- Area I: Communications
- Area II: Mathematics
- Area III: Science
- Area IV: Social & Behavioral Sciences
- Area V: Humanities
- Area VI: Creative and Fine Arts
- Each course must address the three essential skills associated with its content area (see chart)

- Courses may also be classified as “other” if they do not fall into any of these 6 content areas

- Institutional Flexibility

- 22 credits are uniform state-wide
- 9 credits are “flexible” as determined by each institution. This is an opportunity for NMSU to establish a distinctive General Education program.

ALIGNMENT OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO CONTENT AREAS WITHIN THE NEW MEXICO GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM	
General Education Content Area	Skills associated with the content area
Communications	Communication Critical Thinking Information & Digital Literacy
Mathematics	Communication Critical Thinking Quantitative Reasoning
Science	Critical Thinking Personal & Social Responsibility Quantitative Reasoning
Social & Behavioral Sciences	Communication Critical Thinking Personal & Social Responsibility
Humanities	Critical Thinking Information & Digital Literacy Personal & Social Responsibility
Creative and Fine Arts	Communication Critical Thinking Personal & Social Responsibility
Other*	Select any three of the five essential skills for association with course learning outcomes.

\*Courses within an institution's discretionary nine credits, including interdisciplinary courses, may fall outside of the six content areas at the institution's discretion.



Teaching “Essential Skills” in  
General Education Courses

**NMSU Implementation**

The table below specifies how NMSU has allocated the “flexible nine” credits and provides a comparison of the new and previous models.

Previous Model		New Model (NMSU Implementation)			
Content Area	Courses (Credits)	Content Area	Courses (Credits)	22-Credit Fixed	Faculty Senate Approved 9-Credit Flexible
I. Communications	3 (9)	I. Communications	3 (9)	2 (6)	1 (3)
II. Mathematics / Statistics	1 (3)	II. Mathematics	1 (3)	1 (3)	
III. Laboratory Science	2 (8)	III. Science	1-2 (4-7)	1 (4)	1 (3)
IV. Social & Behavioral Sciences	2-3 (6-9)	IV. Social & Behavioral Sciences	1-2 (3-6)	1 (3)	
V. Humanities and Fine Arts	2-3 (6-9)	V. Humanities	1 (3)	1 (3)	
		VI. Creative and Fine Arts	1 (3)	1 (3)	
		Elective (any “G” course)	1 (3)		1 (3)
<b>Total</b>	<b>11 (35)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>10 (31)</b>	<b>7 (22)</b>	<b>3 (9)</b>
Requirement includes a total of 5 classes (15 credits) from Areas IV and V together.		9-credit Flexible: 3 credits from Area I (Communications), 3 credits from either Area III (Science) or Area IV (Social & Behavioral Science), and 3 “elective” credits (any “G” course).			