

Deepening the Connections: General Education at Hong Kong Baptist University

A. Reza Hoshmand

Like the other local tertiary institutions, Hong Kong Baptist University has adopted a four-year degree programme of study to commence in 2012. This change from a 3-year degree to a 4-year degree curriculum has offered the universities an opportunity to further strengthen the educational experiences of their students. In this connection, our university has devoted its efforts to include the concept of liberal education in the degree requirements for a bachelor degree and created the General Education Programme. From the inception of the programme, Hong Kong Baptist University took the initiative to align it with the philosophy of “Whole Person Education” which has been the centre piece of the mission of this institution since its establishment in 1956.

The General Education (GE) curriculum is expected to play a key role in students’ overall undergraduate experience, complementing studies in the specialised disciplines and other learning opportunities. It will expand their educational exposure to a variety of interdisciplinary areas through courses, seminars, practicum and interest group activities. The aim is to ignite students’ interest in extending their learning experiences beyond the traditional subjects and to attain an all-round education experience. It also provides an opportunity that helps its students to define themselves as productive members of society who draw inspiration from independent observation and challenges they encounter. Furthermore, these educational experiences in GE hopes to cultivate interest in our students for life-long learning.

University education aims to provide a well-balanced experience to students. Apart from equipping our graduates with sound knowledge in their specialized field of studies, we also nurture and prepare them to be responsible citizens and independent thinkers with the heart and aspiration to excel in their life endeavors. Ultimately, they will serve our communities, large and small, and we must provide them with the tool with which they have to face and cope with the ever changing challenges ahead.

Accordingly, seven programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) have been developed for the GE Programme. By the time students have completed the 38 units of the GE Programme, they should be able to:

1. Communicate effectively as speakers and writers in both English and Chinese;
2. Access and manage complex information and problems using technologically appropriate means;
3. Apply appropriate mathematical reasoning to address problems in everyday life;
4. Acquire an active and healthy lifestyle;
5. Use historical and cultural perspectives to gain insight into contemporary issues;
6. Apply various value systems to decision-making in personal, professional, and social/political situations;
7. Make connections among a variety of disciplines to gain insight into contemporary personal, professional, and community situations.

Our university has devised its General Education Programme into two distinct categories: The Core Requirement and the Distribution Requirements. The core courses are common to all, whereas the distribution courses allow the students to further broaden their horizons by taking courses outside their field of study.

In particular, the core requirements serve to provide additional academic breadth; support the development of high-level competencies; and to implement a pedagogy that promotes personal development, moral reasoning and citizenship. These attributes are important and beneficial to graduates who will face challenges and take up responsibilities in an increasingly competitive and ever-changing environment after graduation.

The aim of the distribution requirements is to broaden the scope of students' learning by having them pursue areas of knowledge outside of their major discipline. Five areas of learning have been identified: Arts, Business, Communication/Visual Arts, Science/Chinese Medicine, and Social Sciences. As students will already be in a faculty that is within one of these five areas of learning, they will be required to take one course from each of the other four areas, for a total of 12 units.

Outcomes in these courses will align with one or more of the seven intended learning outcomes discussed above. Of particular importance to the distribution requirements is the seventh programme intended learning outcome which asks that students strive to make connections among and synthesize information produced by a variety of disciplines so as to gain insight into contemporary personal, professional, and community situations. As these connections often cross different fields and disciplines, students will be encouraged to take “interdisciplinary” courses to fulfill their GE requirements. Hence, we have incorporated a set of courses in the distribution category under the title of “Interdisciplinary” courses.

In keeping with the University Grant Council's (UGC) requirement, the Outcome-based Teaching and Learning (OBTL) approach is adopted for the GE programme. Towards this end, a set of intended learning outcomes for the overall GE programme and for each GE category under the Core and Distribution Requirements (including interdisciplinary courses) have been developed. Thus, at the macro level, emphasis will be placed on the course intended learning outcomes (CILOs) and their alignment with the overall intended learning outcomes of the GE programme (PILO) as well as those of the respective GE categories (Cat-ILO).

At the course/micro level, OBTL expects constructive alignment between the CILOs, the Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs) and the Assessment Methods (AMs) such that the learners know what is expected of them; be facilitated to achieve the set outcome via well-structured TLAs and be properly assessed for competency in achievement of the said CILOs via suitable AMs. In all of our GE courses we have emphasized the following desired characteristics:

- Utilize engaged pedagogies;
- Emphasize intellectual content as well as generic skills in communication, inquiry, thinking, problem-solving and teamwork;
- Adopt an interdisciplinary frame of reference to foster an appreciation of the relations among different fields of knowledge;
- Relate the subject matters to modern human experience;
- Encourage an inquisitive mind and self-reflection.

As Hong Kong Baptist University moves to implement a 4-year degree program in 2012, it has taken a number of steps to prepare for such a transition. One important element of this change has to do with the design, and development of GE courses. The university has so far developed

over 230 courses for delivery in 2012. The newly created General Education Office (GEO) has been given the responsibility to assist in the smooth implementation of the GE Programme at Hong Kong Baptist University. To prepare for the delivery of GE courses, GEO has worked closely with the various academic units and the Academic Registry to ensure proper scheduling and delivery of GE courses for the double cohort that will be on campus in 2012. Additionally, the GEO will work closely with the faculty colleagues to assure high quality teaching/learning experience for our students.

We recognize that because of the dynamic nature of academic environments, it will be essential that the faculty of the institution be ready and willing to design, develop, and deliver additional interdisciplinary courses in the future years.

We believe that with the significant effort from all the academic units of the university, we have developed a dynamic General Education Programme of study for our students. This approach for broadly educating our students or ‘deepening the connection’ will have a significant impact on the lives of our graduates.

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深化聯繫：香港浸會大學的通識教育

賀書孟¹

吳雲香譯²

同香港其他高校一樣，香港浸會大學已經於 2012 年開始實施四年制本科教育。三年制轉為四年制為各高校提供了進一步強化學生教育體驗的機遇。為此，浸大致力於在本科教育中包涵自由教育理念，並創辦了通識教育課程。通識課程創始之初，浸大主動使之遵循“全人教育”理念。自 1956 年建校以來，“全人教育”理念在本校使命中一貫處於核心地位。

通識教育課程應在學生的全部本科體驗中扮演關鍵角色，與專業學科學習及其他學習機遇相輔相成。通過課程、研討會、實習課以及興趣小組活動，使學生獲得豐富多樣的跨學科領域教育體驗。其目標在於激發學生興趣，超越傳統學科學習體驗，獲得全面的教育體驗。它也提供了這樣一種機遇，幫助學生界定其作為社會有生產效益成員的身份，可以從獨立的觀察以及面臨的挑戰中獲得靈感。再者，這些通識教育體驗有望培養學生終生學習之興趣。

大學教育致力於為學生提供一種均衡體驗。除了使畢業生具備本專業領域的高深知識，大學也培養他們成為以熱情和創造力成就卓越人生的負責任公民和獨立思考者。最終他們將服務於我們的社區，不論其大小。而我們則必須為他們提供應對瞬息萬變的各種挑戰時所需要的工具。

為此，我們為通識教育課程設置了 7 項課程預期學習成果(PILOs)。學生完成通識教育課程的 38 個學分後，他們應當具備以下能力：

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1. 中英雙語讀寫能力強，溝通效果佳；
2. 採取適當技術手段獲取並處理複雜信息及問題；
3. 運用適當的數學推理解決日常生活中的問題；
4. 擁有積極健康的生活方式；
5. 採用歷史和文化的視角，洞察當代問題；
6. 運用不同的價值體系，做出有關個人、專業以及社會/政治的決策；
7. 聯繫不同學科，洞察當代個人、專業以及社區情況。

浸大設計的通識教育課程分為兩個類別：“核心必修課”和“分類選修課”。前者為所有學生修讀，後者則使學生通過修讀本科範疇以外的課程進一步開闊視野。

特別是，“核心必修課”致力於提供額外的學術寬度，促進高水平能力的發展，採取促進個人發展、強化道德推理、提高公民素質的教學方法。因學生畢業後處於競爭日益激烈且不斷變化的環境之中，將面臨挑戰、承擔責任，故上述特質對於畢業生而言，重要且有益。

“分類選修課”的目的在於學生通過追求專業學科領域之外的知識，擴展其學習範圍。我們界定了五大學習範疇：文學、商學、傳理/視覺藝術、理學/中醫學、社會科學。由於學生將在各自院系接受上述某一範疇的學習，故本校要求學生在其餘四個範疇各修讀一門課程，累計 12 學分。

這些課程的成果將至少與上述七項預期學習成果之一相吻合。對於分類選修課至關重要的是第七項課程預期學習成果。它要求學生聯繫多門學科，分析其產生的信息，以便獲得對當代個人、專業以及社區情況的洞察力。由於這些聯繫通常跨越不同領域和學科，我們鼓勵學生修讀“跨學科”課程以完成通識教育要求。為此，我們已經在“分類選修課”類別之下的“跨學科”課程涵蓋了一系列科目供學生選讀。

依據香港大學教育資助委員會的要求，通識教育課程採用果效為本(OBTL)模式。朝著這一目標，浸大為整個通識教育課程、核心必修課與分類選修課（包括跨學科課程）的每一個學習範疇設計了一套預期學習成果。因此，在宏觀層面，浸大強調科目的預期學習成果（CILOs）、整體通識教育課程預期學習成果(PILO)與通識教育每一個學習範疇的預期學習成果（Cat-ILO）之間的吻合。

在課程/微觀層面，果效為本模式要求在課程預期學習成果、教與學活動（TLAs）以及評估方法（AMs）之間達至建設性的吻合，令學習者可以知道課程對他們的要求：通過結構良好的教與學活動，推動學生達到預期學習效果；通過合適的評估方法，恰當評估學生在課程預期學習成果中獲得的能力。在所有的通識教育課程中，我們強調以下特質：

- 採用參與式教學方法；
- 強調在溝通、調查、思考、問題解決以及團隊合作中的知識內容以及通用技巧；
- 採取跨學科參考架構，培養對不同知識領域間聯繫的鑑別能力；
- 聯繫學科內容與現代人類經驗；
- 鼓勵好奇心與自我反思。

由於浸大從 2012 年始將採用四年學制，我們已採取了一系列措施為這一過渡做準備。這一轉變中一個重要元素即與通識教育課程之設計與發展相關。截至目前，浸大已為通識課程設立了 230 多門科目，並將在 2012 年開始講授。新成立的通識教育處（GEO）肩負協助浸大通識教育課程順利實施之責任。為推出通識教育課程，通識教育處已與不同學術單位以及教務處緊密合作，以確保 2012 年新舊學制下通識教育課程之教學時間和講授得到適當安排。此外，通識教育處將與各院系同事密切配合，確保學生享受優質教學/學習體驗。

我們意識到，鑑於學術環境中彼此互動的性質，各院系準備並願意在未來數年設計、發展、教授更多的跨學科課程，相當必要。

我們相信，通過本校所有學術單位的努力不懈，我們已為學生發展了富有活力的通識教育課程。這種廣博教育或“深化聯繫”的學習方式，將對浸大畢業生的一生產生重要影響。

附英文原文：

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Outcomes in these courses will align with one or more of the seven intended learning outcomes discussed above. Of particular importance to the distribution requirements is the seventh programme intended learning outcome which asks that students strive to make connections among and synthesize information produced by a variety of disciplines so as to gain insight into contemporary personal, professional, and community situations. As these connections often cross different fields and disciplines, students will be encouraged to take “interdisciplinary” courses to fulfill their GE requirements. Hence, we have incorporated a set of courses in the distribution category under the title of “Interdisciplinary” courses.

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