

# Gen Ed Revitalization: Key Definitions and Examples

## What are the Gen Ed Learning Outcomes (GELOs)?

### GELO 1: Content Knowledge

*This outcome addresses students' understanding of the worlds in which they live and disciplinary approaches for analyzing those worlds. The knowledge is well defined in R470 and further refined by Core and Breadth area committees.*

### GELO 2: Intellectual Tools

*This outcome focuses on students' use of and facility with skills necessary for them to construct knowledge, evaluate claims, solve problems, and communicate effectively.*

### GELO 3: Responsibility to Self and Others

*This outcome highlights students' relationship with, obligations to, and sustainable stewardship of themselves, others, and the world to promote diversity, social justice, and personal and community well-being.*

### GELO 4: Connected & Applied Learning

*This outcome emphasizes how students' learning in general education classes can be connected and applied in meaningful ways to new settings and complex problems.*

## What is the “Big Question” (BQ)?

The BQ is open-ended, taps into the heart of the discipline, provides an opportunity for integration and connection to personal/social/ professional issues, and addresses the question of “*What can I do with this knowledge?*”

## What are some examples of BQ?

1. Does art reflect culture, or shape it?
2. Can a society modernize and preserve its cultural identity?
3. Are mathematical ideas inventions or discoveries?
4. How can science help me have stronger/healthier interpersonal relationships?
5. What is “the good life”?
6. What is the role of law and government in society?
7. What is the value of reductionism in understanding the physical world?
8. Are we alone?
9. What makes literature/art meaningful?
10. How can I sort out psychology myth from reality?

## What is a Signature Assignment” (SA)?

A SA can be a new or existing activity that requires students to integrate and apply course content to address a significant personal, social, or professional question or issue in some way (through critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, inquiry and analysis, quantitative literacy, etc.) for a specified audience (e.g., peers, laypeople, expert in the field).

## What are the critical elements of a SA?

1. Audience
  - a. Faculty must make explicit for students an audience to whom the SA should be addressed. This requires students to take a perspective and aids assessment of GELO2.
    - i. The choice of audience is at faculty discretion.
    - ii. The audience may be students themselves in the case of a self-reflection, a future employer, peers, or the professor as an “expert in the field” and so on.

2. Personal/social/professional question or issue
  - a. Faculty should state the question or issue for students to address in the SA because this aids assessment of GELO 3. Ideally, the question or issue will somehow be tied to the BQ.
    - i. Faculty can specify the question or issue (i.e., address issue X) or provide students the opportunity to specify it for themselves (i.e., address the meaning/significance).
    - ii. The question or issue may bear on a social concern (e.g., sustainability, social justice, global learning), a personal concern (e.g., self-reflection, evaluation of prior beliefs or knowledge), and/or a professional concern (e.g., being on the job).
3. Integrating and applying course content
  - a. Faculty should specify which course content students need to integrate and apply in the SA because this aids assessment of GELO 4.
    - i. The specification can be explicit and directive (i.e., specific concepts), explicit but less directive (i.e., any of the following content), implicit and directive (i.e., key content from ch. 5 & 6), or implicit and not directive (i.e., content from any part of the course).
4. Intellectual tools
  - a. Faculty should broadly outline *how* students are to bring course content to bear on the question or issue because this aids assessment of GELO 2.
    - i. Intellectual tools include problem solving, interpretation, critique, analysis, evaluation, perspective-taking, and reflection.

## What are some examples of SA?

### QL courses

**BQ:** Is mathematics beautiful or ugly/merely utilitarian?

**SA:** Write a persuasive letter explaining to your peers (or your parents) why mathematics is beautiful or ugly? You need to include at least two mathematical concepts (a math problem, theorem or any mathematical concept that you learned) to support your position and at least one mathematical concept against your position. Clearly explain how your examples support your opinion and why you chose them.

### Introduction to Fiction, ENGL 2220

**BQ:** Why study fiction or what is the value of studying fiction?

**SA:** After reflecting back on the texts we have read over the term, create a persuasive document (a letter, PowerPoint presentation, essay, etc.) explaining to your parents (or someone in your life who fills a parental role) *why studying fiction matters (or doesn't)* and *how fiction is relevant (or not) to your reality*. Include examples and other support from at least two texts we have read for class. In addition, feel free to include support from other fiction you have read.

### Introduction to Criminal Justice, CJ 1010

**BQ:** What can I learn about criminal justice that I don't already know from my favorite crime show?

**SA:** For this assignment, students will choose from a variety of topics (e.g., Miranda warning, police powers, plea bargaining, jury of peers, prison overcrowding, death penalty) and write an argument paper including the following:

- *Overview:* Provide an overview of your topic (i.e., explain your topic as if you are teaching it to a family member or friend).
- *Pros/Cons:* Present arguments for/against OR a list of pros/cons about your topic.
- *Take a stance:* Given your research, which side of the issue do you take and why?
- *Reflection:* What misconceptions (if any) did you have about your topic before your research? Did you learn anything new/interesting that you didn't already know about your topic?

## LS courses

**BQ:** It is a common misconception that the process of evolution by natural selection creates populations of perfectly adapted individuals. Theorists argue such perfection is unattainable. What is the potential for perfect adaptation via natural selection?

**SA:** You will prepare an in-class presentation (4-6 minutes) and participate in a follow-up discussion with your classmates. The presentation will address the following steps.

1. In your own words, define perfect adaptation in a population. What are individuals like? What exemplifies their adaptations? What challenges do adaptations address? How does a population perfectly respond to such challenges? Provide a definition and an example.
2. Depending on your definition, what aspect(s) of natural selection either ensures a result of perfect adaptation or forbids it? Refer to specific features of the process. Provide a review of the relevant process/processes with a clear link to your definition of perfect adaptation.
3. For discussion, be prepared to report whether you hold fast to your presented view or have modified your view based on the presentations of others.
4. Finally, based on presentations and discussion, work with your instructor to summarize how many definitions of perfect adaptation were presented and whether some definitions naturally either permit or preclude the possibility of perfect adaptation.

## Introductory Psychology, PSY 1010 (with sample syllabus language)

This course is a WSU General Education course that presents an introduction to the diverse field of psychology. The WSU General Education program introduces students to academic disciplines through the important (“big”) questions at their core. The inquiry required by these “big questions” provides students with opportunities to integrate and apply their knowledge of the discipline to address a significant personal, social, or professional issue with their intellectual tools, like problem solving or critical thinking. Karl Popper, an influential philosopher and historian of science, said that “Science must begin with myths, and with the criticism of myths.” This WSU General Education course, *Introductory Psychology*, is designed to tackle the following “Big Question”: How can I sort out psychology myth from reality?

All WSU General Education courses have a Signature Assignment that requires students to integrate and apply course content to address a significant personal, social, or professional issue in some way(s) (e.g., with critical or creative thinking, problem solving). The Signature Assignment (SA) in this course will be a presentation in which you will work with peers (~4 students) to present a pop psychology myth (from “50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology”) and debunk it from a scientific psychology perspective. In this SA, you will integrate and apply course content to critique and analyze your group’s assigned myth (e.g., ‘psychiatric labels cause harm by stigmatizing people’) in a 5-minute video to be uploaded to YouTube/Canvas for the general public.