GEC Substitution Requests - Checklist

- **All GEC substitutions should be posted to students records no later than the end of their second semester at USM; they should not wait until the semester a student applies for graduation.**

  By University policy, advisors should complete any course substitutions before the end of the student’s second semester at USM. If transfer courses have not yet been posted to SOAR, the ACAs in the Dean’s office can assist advisors to get a copy of the students’ transfer transcripts even prior to them being posted on SOAR. When students apply for graduation, they should have a clear understanding of which courses and how many hours they still need to complete by their proposed graduation date. Therefore, substitution requests should not be accompanying graduation requests or arrive the same semester as graduation as these requests may not be approved. Monitoring students’ GEC progress on a semesterly basis and submitting substitution requests in a timely manner is a function of good advising. Late requests for substitutions can result in students taking unnecessary classes, delayed graduation including additional tuition and fees for students. Late requests also negatively impact the workload of ACAs and their ability to provide other services to students.

- **Indicate whether or not the course fulfills the GEC/core curriculum requirements at the transfer institution; if it does, attach supporting documentation from the transfer institution.**

  If a course meets the GEC requirements at the transfer institution (regardless of which state), this is the easiest justification for the request to be approved, and does not require further rationales for why the substitution should be approved. Look up the core curriculum requirements of the transfer institution on its website. If it satisfies the GEC/core curriculum requirement at the transfer institution, attach a copy/print-out from transfer institution’s website (or statement on the syllabus) that shows it counts towards the GEC at that institution. If it does not satisfy the GEC requirement, indicate that as well to verify that you have checked the workloads of ACAs and their ability to provide other services to students.

- **Provide the justification on the form and keep it brief and clear.**

  All requests must provide a justification on the actual form; that is, the form must not instruct the reviewer to “see the attached” to find or understand the justification. Avoid extraneous information in the justification and try to limit attachments and supplemental information to what is relevant for the justification to facilitate the review process. Please consider the number of requests that the Associate Provost and GEC Committee must evaluate across the University. For example, if the course counts towards the GEC at the transfer institution, that is sufficient to justify its approval, so additional explanations, such as how it has the same learning outcomes as the USM GEC course, are generally unnecessary.

- **Include the USM Transfer Evaluation (Equivalent Course Information) from SOAR if the course transferred in as a “TFR [Program] Elective.”**

  Substitution requests for courses that transferred in without a specific USM course prefix and title; that is, with the title “TFR [Program] Elective” (e.g., MAT 701AAA, ART 701BBB), should include a printout of the USM Transfer Evaluation (Equivalent Course Information). This can be found on SOAR: Main Menu > Records and Enrollment > Transfer Credit Evaluation > Course Credits _ _ . The Equivalent Course Information shows the original course number and title of the course at the transfer institution, which is necessary to match it to the course description and other documentation used to determine whether it is an appropriate substitution for a USM GEC course or not.

- **Provide the USM transfer course number, not just the transfer institution’s course number on the form.**

  For the question “What course is being requested as a substitution for the required GEC course,” provide both the original course number from the transfer institution and the USM transfer course number (e.g., BIO 100 / BSC 701AAA). Only giving the original course number/title from the transfer institution does not allow reviewers to match it to the specific course that actually got transferred to USM. Consult the USM Transfer Evaluation (see above) to determine the USM transfer course prefix and number that matches the original transfer institution’s course number and title.

- **Highlight the relevant information/sections on attachments.**

  Use a highlighter or underlining on attachments to allow the reviewer to immediately find the relevant information. For example, if you print out a webpage from the transfer institution, highlight the relevant course on its list of core courses; on the student’s DPR, highlight the transfer course requested for substitution.

- **Other notes:**

  - **A USM course with a higher course number than the GEC course is not acceptable justification for a substitution.**

    More advance courses in a discipline are often more specialized and narrower in scope and thus do not expose the student to the breadth of material required to fulfill the GEC requirement; higher number courses are typically not the same material at a “higher level.” For example, ENG 470 (Studies in Antebellum Literature) is not the equivalent of ENG 203 (World Literature) taught at a higher level; SOC 450 (Social Psychology) is not equivalent to SOC 101 (Understanding Society) at a higher level.

  - **Pick a specific course for the substitution request rather than a range of courses.**

    Claims that the GEC requirement has been met due to the student having taken a variety of courses in a particular discipline have rarely (if ever) been approved. It is better to choose the single most appropriate course to request as a substitution than to try to argue that a variety of courses taken as a whole satisfy the GEC requirement.

  - **Substitution requests based on misadvisement may be considered with evidence.**

    In the rare case that a student has been misadvised that a non-GEC course would count toward GEC requirement, the substitution request should include evidence of how the student was misadvised. Advisors should take responsibility for any misadvisement and take care to ensure that it is not repeated.