



University of  
Pittsburgh

College of  
General Studies



COLLEGE OF GENERAL STUDIES

Instructor's Handbook

## *Welcome*

The College of General Studies (CGS) thanks you for accepting this teaching assignment. We look forward to working with you during the upcoming academic term. If you have questions, concerns, or require special assistance during the term please reach out to the following contacts below.

Please keep this document for reference throughout the academic term. You may also find links to many faculty resources on the CGS website.

*Note: The content of this handbook does not supersede University policies and procedures.*

### *CGS Online Learning and Academic Programs Contact Information*

Office Hours: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm Monday through Friday

Email: [cgsapa@pitt.edu](mailto:cgsapa@pitt.edu)

General Phone: 412-624-6600

Fax: 412-624-5461

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## COLLEGE OF GENERAL STUDIES: OVERVIEW

### Our Mission

We help students reach their academic and personal goals, so they are prepared for the next stages of their life and career.

*The College of General Studies offers multidisciplinary and flexible degree and certificate programs, as well as continuing and lifelong learning opportunities designed to meet the ambition of the adult learner. The College invests in the success of its students by providing excellent educational opportunities, outstanding personalized services and specialized career and support programs, as well as access to the faculty, resources, and alumni network of a large research university. Our academic programs equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to achieve and advance their personal and professional goals.*

We have created a variety of curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular opportunities to allow students to take full advantage of the University community. We partner with seven University of Pittsburgh schools to provide support to our undergraduate majors, certificate programs, and minors. A list of our academic programs can be viewed online in the [CGS Academics section here](#).

All academic programs consist of courses taught by University faculty as well as professionals in various fields. We are constantly seeking new opportunities to blend faculty resources with the needs of various fields and disciplines in the region.

### Student Population and Needs

About 60% of CGS students fall into the age range of 21-35, with the largest portion of them in the 21-25 age category.

Many CGS students are parents, veterans, homemakers, retirees, reentry students, transfer students, career changers, and working professionals seeking educational advancement and personal fulfillment. What makes the needs of nontraditional students unique is the challenge of fitting their studies with the complexity of family responsibilities, community roles, employment, and economic pressure. The CGS approach takes this into consideration. We make sure that our services and programs are offered in a variety of course formats, from face-to-face evening and Saturday classes to hybrid and fully online, in order to maximize the students' opportunities to participate.

### Course Scheduling

Face-to-face classes are scheduled once a week in the evening or on Saturdays and this is done in order to accommodate the nontraditional students, who work day jobs. In addition, we offer fully online (web) and hybrid courses to provide further flexibility for full or part-time students.

Note: While CGS courses are primarily developed and scheduled to meet the academic needs of CGS students, they are open to all University of Pittsburgh students just as undergraduate courses throughout the University are open to College of General Studies students.

## Course Modality or Instructional Delivery Method (IDM)

Hybrid and web courses have weekly online discussions, assignments, quizzes, as well as individual and group projects; all within the University Learning Management System, Canvas.

In addition, **hybrid** courses are supplemented with a limited number (typically 3) of face-to-face on-campus or virtual workshops and **web** courses are asynchronous, meaning they have no scheduled meetings. Learn more about the [online course formats supported by the College of General Studies here](#).

CGS Class section numbers begin with 7 and the second digit determines the course modality. All other schools on the Oakland Campus begin with a 1.

Class Section Numbers	CGS Program
70xx – 70xx	On-Campus
73xx – 73xx	CGS Online Hybrid (Limited Virtual Meetings)
75xx – 75xx	CGS Online Web (Asynchronous / no scheduled meetings)
77xx – 77xxx	CGS Online Hybrid (Limited On-Campus Meetings)

*Examples of class sections numbers as seen in PeopleSoft:*

ENGCOMP 1400-7510 is a CGS Online Web ASY course offering.  
CGS 0092-7710 is a CGS Online Hybrid course.

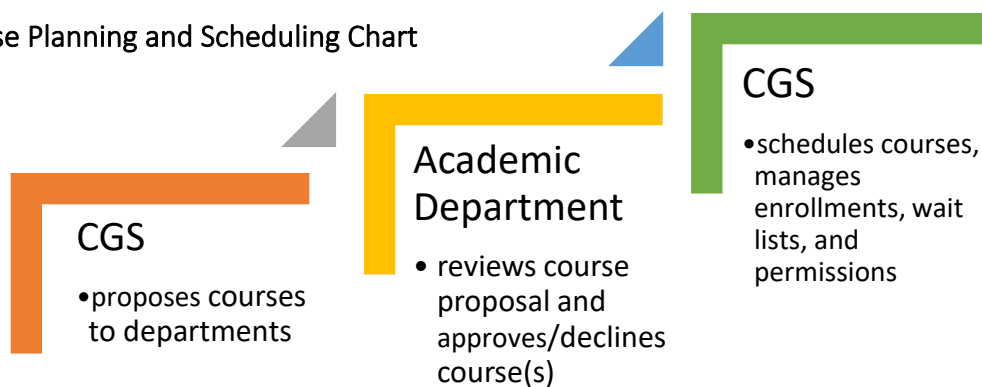
## CGS Academic Affairs Monthly E-Bulletin

This is a monthly e-bulletin for our faculty, keeping them apprised of College-related events, policies, procedures, faculty trainings, semester deadlines, changes to programs, and trends in pedagogy.

## What We Do for You

- Manage course scheduling, enrollments, permission numbers, and waitlists.
- Notify you of important dates, upcoming deadlines, training opportunities, and CGS policies.
- Provide instructional design support services and training.
- CGS online instructors get exclusive access to the Teaching Center for proctored exams. CGS coordinates this process with the Testing Center for instructors requiring this service.
- Coordinate classroom surveys with the Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching (OMET).

## Course Planning and Scheduling Chart



### **Teaching Appointments**

The courses offered by CGS are the curriculum of academic departments throughout the University of Pittsburgh. Consequently, academic departments vet, hire, and, working with CGS Academic Programs, assign instructors to teach the sections offered by our college. Faculty interested in online teaching should demonstrate training and experience in online course instruction. Learn more at [Teaching Online at CGS](#).

### **Employment Paperwork**

Instructors complete all necessary employment paperwork through the academic department in which they are hired. Contact your home department for more information.

### **Teaching Contracts**

Part-time instructors assigned to teach face-to-face and online classes through CGS receive a teaching agreement from CGS prior to the start of the term they will be teaching for the College.

### **Compensation and Payroll**

All payroll processes are managed by the payroll department in the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences and CGS Dean's office.



## CGS POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND EXPECTATIONS FOR CGS COURSES

### Course Description and Textbooks

Course sections taught for CGS must adhere to the departmental description of the course and utilize the textbook(s) and materials approved by the department. It is our expectation that the faculty notify CGS of any departmentally approved changes to the course description or required textbook materials. If an instructor's desk copy is needed, instructors should contact their home academic department or should request a copy through the publisher's website. Many publishers require institutional or department verification. Another option is to request an electronic version of the textbook by registering at [VitalSource.com/educators](https://www.vitalsource.com/educators).

### Classroom Scheduling and Classroom Change Requests

Classrooms are assigned when the schedule is entered into PeopleSoft by the Registrar's classroom scheduling office. Special arrangements or changes must be submitted through CGS no later than the end of the add/drop period. [Contact Leslie Hilliard](#), CGS Academic Programs assistant, for further information.

### Course Materials/Textbook Orders (*if not already submitted*)

Instructors teaching for CGS Online or a CGS-owned course must order textbooks (including e-Books) online through the [Book Center's web site](#) and fill out this [Textbook Adoption Form](#).

Instructors teaching a traditional face-to-face course housed in a department other than CGS, should contact their academic department administrators.

### Course Supplies

Requests for support for course supplies and materials should be directed to the department in which the course is housed.

### Office Hours

All faculty members are required to keep office hours, in addition to meeting students when necessary, by appointment. [See the University policy on office hours in the Pitt Faculty Handbook](#).

Times when you are available should be stated on your syllabus. Face-to-face instructors should provide office addresses; online and hybrid instructors should make clear the means, by which individual student meetings can take place, such as via Canvas Conferences, Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, or phone.

### Course Prerequisites

Students may not enroll in a course for which they do not meet the prerequisite by the time the course begins. In specific cases, prerequisites may be waived by the instructor or upon approval by CGS Academic Programs or the chair of the department that houses the course. If a waiver is granted, a permission number will need to be requested through CGS Academic Affairs. For additional details, visit our [Closed Class and Special Approval for CGS Class Sections web page](#).

### Course Enrollment Caps, Reserved Seats, and Wait Lists

#### Enrollment Caps

The typical CGS enrollment cap for a 3-credit face-to-face class is 35 and online sections typically cap at 25-30 students (except for W courses). These enrollment caps can be changed upon request.



### **Seat Reserves**

To better accommodate CGS students, the College typically reserves a number of seats in its sections specifically for our students. These seats will remain reserved until a designated date each term, after which any unfilled seats will be open to all students.

*Empty CGS reserved seat release dates:*

Fall Term - 12:00AM, August 1

Spring Term - 12:00AM, December 1

Summer Term - 12:00AM, April 1 (some 6week2 sections release in mid-May)

### **Wait Lists**

Courses that reach their enrollment cap will become closed to further students. Students may then add their names to a course's wait list; the wait list also has a set cap. Students on the wait list will automatically be enrolled in the class if a seat becomes available (e.g., because a previously enrolled student dropped, or the cap was raised). [Read the Registrar's FAQ on Wait Lists.](#)

### **Course Permissions**

You are never obliged to exceed the course cap. If a student asks you for permission to enter your closed course, please direct the student to our [Closed Class and Special Approval webpage](#) for further information on the process.

*Factors that go into CGS' decision include but are not limited to:*

- Did students put themselves on the waitlist?
- Are there seniors and juniors (others) on the waitlist in front of the student requesting special permission?
- Seniors graduating at the end of the term might be given priority consideration if the course is a major core requirement.
- Elective course and general education requirements are usually not considered immediate necessities because there are many options to fulfill these needs.
- Are there enough desks in the room? (on campus face-to-face classes only)

### **Low Enrollment and Course Cancellations**

Courses in which low enrollment falls below 10 may be cancelled by CGS Academic Programs. Cancellation dates are typically two to three weeks prior to the start of the term. If your class is cancelled, both you and your department will be notified via email by CGS.

### **Academic Calendar**

The Office of the Provost maintains the [University's official academic calendar](#). The Registrar's Office maintains an [extended academic calendar](#), which shows the dates' classes begin and end, finals week and grade deadlines, and other important dates.

*Please note:* Online courses begin on the first day of the term unless a different date is noted. Instructors are expected to have their courses made available to students in Canvas on the first day of class. Exact dates for add/drop period are listed in the [enrollment calendar on the Registrar's website](#).

## Final Examination

CGS classes continue to meet during finals week. Where regular final examinations are to be given, they must be held during the last scheduled class meeting. Due dates must be stated in the course syllabus and students should be given sufficient time and resource materials to prepare for their final examination.

CGS Online instructors should consider setting aside a specific timeframe during finals week for students to take the exam either at the Testing Center or approved off-campus location (if proctored exams in person are required) or within the Canvas system.

## Class/Workshop Cancellations

If you need to cancel a class/workshop session, please notify your students. CGS expects that make-up sessions, or coursework equivalent to the credit hours for one class meeting, will be arranged (online or off-line), should a class be missed. You must also [notify our office](#) or (412) 624-6617 with the above information.

## Holiday Policy for Online Courses

Online instructors should consider university holidays and breaks when scheduling exams, assignment due dates, and meetings. National holidays such as Labor Day, Memorial Day, etc.: instruction in asynchronous online classes continues these weeks with flexibility. Instructors may still assign readings or other tasks but should avoid scheduling examinations or other due dates for graded activities on recess days.

## Canvas

All College of General Studies face-to-face instructors are strongly encouraged to develop a Canvas site for their classes. Course shells are generally made available several weeks before the beginning of the term. For information, please [visit Canvas @ Pitt](#) on The University Center for Teaching and Learning website. For Canvas-related tech assistance, email the [Education Software Consulting team](#).

**Note:** CGS Online Learning and Academic Programs staff will be in the course as TAs or Designers so we may assist you and to make sure that the course has been made available to students on the first day of the term as required.

## Course Enrollments and Class Lists

Faculty can access course enrollment lists and send e-mail messages to class rosters through the Faculty Center on [My Pitt Portal](#). You will need to log in with your PITT Username and Password.

## Credit Hour Policy for Online Courses

The College of General Studies has established the following curricular guidelines for determining credit hours for online courses developed and offered through CGS. These guidelines are in compliance and consistent with [Federal](#), [Middle States Commission on Higher Education](#), and [University of Pittsburgh policy](#) related to the awarding of academic credit.

One academic credit hour delivered in the traditional face-to-face classroom setting typically consists of 50 minutes of direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student preparation over a 15-week academic semester. The amount of student effort expected for a 1-credit course translates into 750 minutes of class time and 1,800 minutes out-of-class time for a total of 2,550 minutes. A 3-credit hour course must meet 3 academic hours per week (3x50 min) and has 6 hours (6x60 min) of homework. Over a 15-week semester, this is equivalent to 2,250 minutes of seat time and 5,400 minutes of outside work for 7,650 total minutes per term.

Minimum instruction and outside-of-class time are calculated according to this formula:

$$([50 + 120] \times \# \text{ of course credits}) \times \# \text{ of weeks} = \text{total \# of minutes for seat time and outside work}$$

The same standard for awarding credit hours applies to courses in the online modality (web and hybrid). In asynchronous learning environments, class time and homework are combined but students are still expected to spend the equivalent amount of time on their online coursework [as compared to the face-to-face course equivalent] each week as per the above guidelines. For example, for an undergraduate 3-credit online course, class time and outside work time should amount to a total of 510 minutes per week.

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*When designing and developing online courses, instructors must consider the following:*

- It is CGS expectation that online courses have student-learning outcomes that are equivalent to those for courses taught in the traditional format and that course objectives and learning outcomes are clearly stated in the course syllabus.
- It is the responsibility of the instructor developing and teaching the course to be able to demonstrate, via class assignments, readings, projects, and class attendance and participation policies, that the expected student activity load is sufficient in scope and rigor for the academic level and credits of the course and reasonably distributed throughout the semester.
- Course developers and instructors are asked to estimate the average amount of time students are expected to spend interacting with course content each week and address any inconsistencies, if necessary. Interactions with course content include, but are not limited, to:
  - Orientation to the course in Canvas, incl. software, discussion board or blog setups; etc.
  - Reading and Viewing
  - Online material with no interactivity (PowerPoint slides, syllabus, announcements, online articles, journals, textbooks [online and traditional], assignment instructions, grade rubrics, etc.);
  - Online materials with interactivity (tutorials, multimedia);
  - Video, audio, podcasts, webinars, or simulations.
  - Activities with active instructor involvement, such as:
    - Instructor-led online chats, discussion board interactions, or group work;
    - Online office hours;

- Instructor-narrated and recorded lecture slides and videos.
- Assignments utilizing Canvas tools:
  - Quizzes, exams, discussion forums, blogs, simulations, gaming, podcasts.

Note: Studying for examinations, homework assignments, preparing presentations, and writing papers are considered outside-of-class work.

Here is a sample sheet for estimating asynchronous contact hours.

Schedule	Interactions with Course Content	Minutes/Hours estimated	Outside Instructional Time	Minutes/Hours estimated	Total Time
Week #1					
Week #2					

### Course Syllabus

Faculty are expected to prepare a course syllabus, an at-a-glance calendar, and any relevant course materials for the CGS section(s) they teach. A copy of the course syllabus and course schedule is due to CGS Academic Affairs within the first month of the semester and should be submitted via our [online Course Syllabus Submission form](#). CGS courses are academically rigorous, and faculty are expected to uphold the same academic standards for CGS courses as they do for any other courses taught for the respective academic department.

### Student Evaluations of Teaching (OMET)

All faculty members are expected to have their course(s) evaluated by students using a standard evaluation instrument developed by the [Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching \(OMET\)](#). Evaluation (quantitative and qualitative) results will be used by CGS for administrative purposes, including planning future course revisions. These results can be made available to department chairs upon request.

The OMET request process is automated and administered through Canvas during the last three weeks of class each term. CGS instructors no longer need to request surveys. Students will receive an announcement on the first day of the survey period. Links can also be accessed through the course Canvas landing page.

[Instructors can access their Teaching Survey Dashboard](#) for reports, to monitor response rates, or to add questions to their survey.

In order to ensure good response rates, *CGS Online instructors* should send an announcement once a week during each of the survey weeks reminding students of the importance of their participation in the survey to ensure the continued development and availability of online courses. *Instructors teaching face-to-face classes* should designate a particular class and time (20 min) and have students take the survey in class at that time. Please encourage students to bring to class their laptops or another handheld electronic device (iPad, tablet, smart phone, etc.) in order to complete the questionnaire. See also [OMET's recommended strategies for increasing response rates](#).

### Grading

Grading is used to evaluate student work and to assess students' performance and progress in the class. It is also a means of providing feedback and motivation for student learning and improvement and, as

such, it should be integrated into the course organization and aligned with your learning objectives. It is, therefore, expected that CGS instructors develop clear grading criteria and standards for the assessment and evaluation of student work and include their grading scale, timeline for feedback, and expectations in the syllabus. Students should be reminded of the grading criteria at the beginning of the semester and provided with a scoring rubric and feedback on class assignments and activities throughout the semester. Instructors are also strongly encouraged to provide progress reports midway through the semester.

Final grade submission in PeopleSoft must be completed by instructors for each session. For more information on grade submissions, visit the [Grades section on the Registrar's website](#).

### **"G" Grades**

"G" grades may be given when class work is unfinished because of extenuating personal circumstances that are beyond one's control like major illness, injury, or family issues such as birth or death. For students enrolled in CGS courses, the "G" grade may be assigned if the above conditions are met and the student has been making steady and satisfactory progress in the course (met the "G" grade requirements as listed in the syllabus), and the instructor believes that additional time to complete the course is warranted. Students should be able to provide evidence/documentation to substantiate their request. If a "G" grade is granted, students are instructed in writing to complete some clearly defined work (e.g. a final examination paper, etc.) within a specified period of time. The "G" must be completed no later than one year after the term or session in which the class was taken. Summer counts as a term. For additional information, visit the [Grades section on the Registrar's website](#). A sample copy of the CGS G Grade Instructor-Student Contract may be found on the [CGS Teaching Toolbox: Resources and Links webpage](#).

### **Grade Changes**

Grade Changes for students can be submitted online through the Pitt portal. Once the grade change request is submitted, the grade change request is routed into a workflow for authorized academic center representatives to approve the grade changes; once approved, the Registrar's Office finalizes the transaction. Instructions: [Faculty Grade Change Submission](#).

### **Academic Integrity Standards**

The College of General Studies is committed to upholding academic integrity and honesty across all modes of learning. As part of this commitment, we follow the academic integrity guidelines and principles set forth by the University of Pittsburgh Office of the Provost. Matters pertaining to academic integrity and the code of student conduct at CGS will be handled in accordance with the academic integrity procedures established by the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences and fall under the purview of the Office of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies and CGS.

- [Guidelines on Academic Integrity: Student and Faculty Obligations and Hearing Procedures](#), Office of the Provost.
- [Academic Integrity Code](#), Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences

### **Academic Assessment**

The faculty agrees to assist, if called upon, with the implementation of the College's academic program assessment plans, which are part of the [University of Pittsburgh's initiative to assess student learning](#). Such assistance typically involves the forwarding of copies of designated students' graded essays/assignments along with prompts and a syllabus but may include occasional service on an assessment panel where such essays/assignments are reviewed.

## CAMPUS RESOURCES AND SERVICES

### Teaching Support Services

The [University Center for Teaching and Learning](#) provides a range of teaching support services to full-time and part-time instructors, as well as graduate student assistants.

### Media Services (Audio-Visual Equipment and Films)

[Classroom and Event Services](#) is Pitt's central resource for instructional technology. The office offers a variety of services to the University community, which include delivering technology to classrooms, lecture video recording, long-term equipment loans, and more. The Classroom Services office located on the lower level of Alumni Hall; their phone number is 412-648-7240. For more information on these services, please contact [ClassroomServices@pitt.edu](mailto:ClassroomServices@pitt.edu).

Additional media resources (films, audio...) are available in the [Hillman Library Stark Media Center](#). Instructors need only take their Pitt ID to the Stark Media Center (G-20 Hillman Library) to be added to their database. After your first visit, you will be able to place orders online. For more information, contact the Media Services Information Center by phone - 412-648-7232 or 412-648-5930 or [visit their website](#).

### Identification Card (Panther Card)

Panther Central is located at Litchfield Towers, Tower C can issue a new or expiring Panther Card approximately two weeks after the start of the upcoming semester. [Visit the Panther Central website](#) and submit your photo online.

### Locked Classrooms and Housekeeping Issues

Call Police Services at 412-624-2121 or email: [police@pitt.edu](mailto:police@pitt.edu) (please do not contact them for media issues).

The University has a strict NO FOOD or BEVERAGES policy in place for the Nationality Rooms and faculty members are held responsible for any damages.

### Testing Center

Proctored testing for courses offered through CGS Online is offered by the [University of Pittsburgh Testing Center](#), G-33 Cathedral of Learning, 4200 Fifth Avenue, on the Oakland campus. CGS will contact faculty members to confirm their plans for utilizing proctored services at the Testing Center. Students can elect to take supervised exams in Oakland or at any one of several testing centers and will be responsible for incurred fees.