

**General Education Review Committee
Subcommittee for Criteria #4**

DRAFT toward report

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CRITERION FOUR: TEACHING AND LEARNING: EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

The following are suggested items for consideration for analysis and for the report.

1. Process for Assessing Student Learning. *Describe the General Education assessment of student learning process, including student learning plans, reports, and feedback from the General Education Assessment Committee.*

Overview. Currently, the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) has developed “Phase One” of a system designed to evaluate student learning from a programmatic perspective (i.e., assessing how well students are meeting the Gen Ed learning outcomes). Phase One focuses on the category General Education Effective Communication, although one course in GEQR will be assessed (MATH 110) and information about how selected programs collect data on Learning Beyond the Classroom will be included. Phase Two is in the planning stages. Members of the GEAC have scheduled a retreat for March 13 to design the next steps; they will also attend the University Assessment Institute (April 30-May1) for purposes of further planning for Phase Two and for the Gen Ed Assessment Institute, which will focus on GEQR and Knowledge of the Disciplines or Perspectives on a Diverse World, and other needs and visions.

The GEAC has worked with coordinators of the following programs to help coordinate the expectations of the Higher Learning Commission, particularly “closing the loop.” Each program plans to submit a report to the GEAC for review, and information gleaned from those reports will be included in the year-end report submitted to the University Assessment Committee.

Phase One

General Education Effective Communication

- CTAC 124 (Doris Fields);
- ENGL 121 (Derek Mueller & Kate Pantelides);
- ESLN 412 (Kimberly Anderson);
- Writing Intensive courses (Ann Blakeslee) will contribute to the first stage of Gen Ed assessment of student learning because it is closely linked to effective communication.

General Education Quantitative Reasoning

- MATH 110 (Chris Gardiner & Stephanie Casey)

Learning Beyond the Classroom (Decky Alexander). Note: Michael Tew will also be consulted because he and other previous Gen Ed Assessment Committee members had begun to organize an assessment.

Strengths. First, learning outcomes were established for all categories of revised General Education program (2007). The previous GEAC helped to orchestrate an important initial phase of assessing student learning—analysis of the outcomes and substantive changes to the ones for GEQR. Furthermore, there are faculty and department heads across campus who have critical institutional memory about the purposes for the changes in Gen Ed and the potential role of assessing student learning in strengthening the program over time. This capacity has assisted members of the current GEAC by offering insights and suggestions.

Next, the GEAC has reconstituted and is represented by faculty from four colleges (David Gore, College of Technology; Stephanie Casey, College of Arts and Sciences; Sun Hae Jang, College of Health and Human Services; Matt Hammond, College of Business; and Doug Baker, College of Arts and Sciences). The committee has engaged with the coordinators mentioned above to develop the initial phase of assessing how well students are meeting the learning outcomes for GEEC and GEQR. The coordinators have agreed to contribute reports (ENGL 121 and CTAC 124 did so in February, and ESLN 412 will by April). In the process of working with past GEAC members and faculty and department heads of GEEC courses, coordinators of the representative GEQR course, and the coordinator of LBC, the GEAC members are helping to build capacity among faculty to lead assessment efforts, although this is a challenge also.

There is data available through IRIM and the Graduating Senior Surveys that can assist in helping to strengthen analysis of student learning, at least indicators of success might inform the process.

Weaknesses

Confusion over What Counts as Assessment. One key weakness is that many stakeholders confuse assessment of student learning with assessment of Gen Ed as a program. Next, the input and reporting systems need clarification (e.g., templates for reporting must be sent to the GEEC coordinators, instructions for submitting reports must be described, etc.). Although members of the GEAC bring diverse disciplinary backgrounds to bear on the process, they are in the first year of this essential collaborative work, and it will take time to build the necessary knowledge and system.

Training Across Diverse Programs and Departments. As noted by reviewers of the Gen Ed Assessment Report for 2013-14, the program must demonstrate that it is in the process of “closing the loop.” In order for this to occur, there needs to be more training of part-time and full-time lecturers, as well as faculty, in how to “close the loop,” etc. Another challenge is that Gen Ed has a large amount of courses from programs across the university, and there is no norm for assessing student learning. An implication is this: if faculty are unclear as to what is needed, then they will not privilege programmatic assessment in any way. Therefore, assessment of student learning is not currently informing programmatic decisions, which is especially needed for continuous improvement.

Opportunities. The key opportunity is to build an assessment system little by little. Because of the past work begun by the previous GEAC, by the former Office of Instructional Effectiveness and Assessment, and current college assessment systems, most faculty are aware of the need to assess student learning. CANVAS offers another potential opportunity because it has an assessment portal. Similarly, IRIM has continued to offer support, especially through availability of data and timely return of requests.

Threats. The main threats concern sustainability of the GEAC, support for the committee, particularly efforts toward building capacity across campus. The workload portends to be greater than a typical standing committee (especially in terms of creating the system, managing it, and choosing and initiating technological resources to archive, etc.). If assessment of student learning is not part of the decision making for Gen Ed, EMU will be missing a key component for continuous improvement.

2. Student Success Indicators. Describe the General Education program's student success indicators (e.g., research and creative accomplishments, community engagement, co-curricular learning, or other achievements).

Four categories of student success indicators have been identified:

- *Assessment Data from Phase One:* Reports from the above groups mentioned will be summarized and described in the annual report sent to the University Assessment Committee.
- *Student Public Performances* (e.g., Celebration of Student Writing, organized by ENGL 121 coordinator and instructors; and the Undergraduate Research Fair). The GEAC could gather a list of student participants in Celebration of First-Year Writing, and other similar types of student performances relevant to Gen Ed. Related, LBC lists of students participating in service learning, or other community projects will be collected also.
- *Grades*, particularly the percentage of students passing Gen Ed courses; however, as the Review Committee has discussed, analysis of the data has multiple implications.
- *IRIM Data* on the percentage of students who continue beyond Gen Ed courses.

Strengths. Through conversations with faculty, department heads and deans, we have learned that there are multiple performances that demonstrate that students are learning, or have learned. IRIM has data that can be mined for success indicators (e.g., grades, completion rates, etc.).

Weaknesses. Probably the main challenge to gathering data that indicate success is time for committee members to conceptualize the sources and begin and sustain the process for collecting and analyzing data. For example, although ENGL 121 orchestrates the Celebration of Student Writing, do they compile lists of students who participated and provide some type of rubric for how well students contributed? Or, what data sources actually indicate student success. Right now the GEAC has only five members and the time presumably required to gather and analyze data that suggests success appears daunting.

Opportunities and Threats. The main opportunity is for the GEAC, along with members from the Review Committee, to conceptualize sources of success indicators and to plan how to collect and analyze data. If these opportunities are not realized the Gen Ed program will potentially be unable to demonstrate how it knows students are succeeding, except by an aggregation of grades or some large-scale data points that only suggest success. Of course, what constitutes "success" should be agreed upon, at least at committee level.

3. Links among Grades, Retention and Completion. *Describe trends in the General Education program evidenced by grading practices, student retention rates, and time to degree completion.*

This category will demand planning, particularly to determine what will constitute evidence of trends, or how phrases such as “grading practices” are defined. The following will need to be collected, analyzed and summarized:

- Cumulative grade totals for Gen Ed courses, especially for purposes of analyzing the totals for inferential purposes.
- Retention rates (IRIM)
- Years to completion rates (IRIM)

Strengths. IRIM has data available to analyze on these criteria. (The appendix for this section will include an examples analysis of grades produced by Konnie Kustron & Peggy Liggit.)

Weaknesses. The time needed for committee members to select and analyze data might demand more time than current members have to devote to this. In other words, more released time may be necessary.

Opportunities and Threats. Faculty and department heads could begin gathering the above types of data and analyze by department. This would distribute the workload and potentially benefit departments as well as the university and its quest to provide useful information to the Higher Learning Commission, among others.

4. Gen Ed & Degree Completion. *Describe any roadblocks in the General Education program that appear to impede students’ time to degree completion.*

Through analysis of links among grades, retention, and completion, evidence will be provided that signals roadblocks. In particular, based on analysis of data, a survey might be necessary to gather further information from department heads, Gen Ed advisors, and students, among others.

5. Implications and Recommendations

For example, consider building a process for assessing the efficacy of the Gen Ed outcomes—how can Gen Ed improve?

- Through the website and training of instructors, distinguish definitions of “assess Gen Ed.” For example, assessing student learning toward meeting outcomes is different from evaluating the efficacy of the program as a whole.
- Bolster training of instructors in approaches to assessing student learning based on the Gen Ed outcomes.
- Clarify and select what constitutes “student success indicators” so a common language is designed for purposes of evaluating overall program efficacy.

- Generate a sustainable approach to analyzing data on “student success indicators.”
- Select representative data points for evaluating effectiveness of Gen Ed in preparing students for upper level academic work and to support retention efforts.
- Separate indicators of “roadblocks” to completion for purposes of more accurately locating and analyzing data (e.g., assessment of student learning vs. “success indicators” outside of the class).