

GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE (GEAC)

AY 2013 - 2014

FINAL REPORT ON GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

Submitted to the Office of the Provost by the General Education Assessment Committee 10/29/14

General Education Assessment Committee

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Academic Year 2013 – 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The General Education Assessment Committee is charged with directly assessing student learning outcomes for the KU General Education Program. In this third year of its existence, the committee continues to pilot the assessment and renewal plan that has been developed in accordance with its bylaws.
- This is the General Education Assessment Committee's third annual report, based on the pilot assessment process, which analyzes data from AY13-14 relevant to Goal 3 of the new General Education Program: *To inculcate a sense of personal and social responsibility that is anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real world challenges.*
- Data were derived from course-embedded instruments addressing four learning domains of Goal 3: Local and global civic knowledge and engagement, Intercultural knowledge and competence, Ethical reasoning and action, and Personal qualities and attitudes such as passion, curiosity, self-confidence, imagination, cooperation, commitment, and support for life-long learning.
- A curriculum map was developed by asking department chairs to indicate which courses in their curriculum met each of the different domains for the three general education goals. This information was given to a computer science student and his professor, Dr. Greg Schaper. They developed an electronic database which could be searched to identify a sample of courses that met the domains in Goal 3. GEAC recruited volunteer faculty to assess their course using the identified domain.
- A PowerPoint instructional module was created by the GEAC committee which highlighted the essence of assessment and how to complete the necessary reports for their domain. This module was used to support both the recruitment and and training of volunteer faculty.
- Data were gathered using templates based on the VALUE (Valid Assessment of Undergraduate Education) rubrics of the Association of American Colleges and Universities and approved by the GEAC committee. The rubrics or reporting templates were adapted by GEAC to create a common rating scheme for use across disciplines.
- For the assessment of Goal 3 domains, data from 12 courses, totaling 840 data points representing student academic performance, revealed some strengths and weaknesses in the assessment process. Data from one of these courses was not used, and data was requested from 18 classes.
- Strengths in the general education program and its assessment process include the use of the GEAC reporting templates by most participants in this round of assessment and the initial development of a curriculum map, a major achievement for GEAC and KU.

- Recommendations for future growth in the assessment process include 1) the short-term goals of managing the transition from a pilot study to a permanent program of general education assessment and, 2) further development of the curriculum map, and 3) long-term goals of discussions and training related to the scaffolding of general education learning goals and benchmarking.
- No changes to the structure of the general education program or curriculum improvements are recommended at this time as this is the third year of a pilot of this assessment process.
- The committee respectfully requests that resources continue to be allocated to the committee as assessment continues to be a dominant focus and concern at Kutztown University and in higher education generally.

I. INTRODUCTION

The General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) has been charged with collecting and analyzing assessment data on student learning outcomes emerging from Kutztown University's General Education Program. The new General Education Program, in its third year of implementation, consists of three Learning Goals each containing a number of specific domains:

Goal 1 - To cultivate intellectual and practical skills that are practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance,

Goal 2 - To develop an understanding of human cultures and the physical and natural world that is focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring, and,

Goal 3 - To inculcate a sense of personal and social responsibility that is anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real world challenges.

The structural components that facilitate achieving the Learning Goals of this General Education Program include:

- The University Core Curriculum, containing 12 credits distributed across four areas: Oral Communication, Written Communication, Mathematics, and Wellness;
- University Distribution Requirements, containing 15 credits distributed across five areas: Natural Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, Arts, and Free Electives
- Competencies across the Curriculum, thematic courses containing 21 credits distributed across five themes (9 credits in Writing Intensive; 3 credits each in Quantitative Literacy or Computer Intensive; Visual Literacy or Communication Intensive; Cultural Diversity; and Critical Thinking.

Because the program consists of three goals, GEAC decided to pilot the first three-year assessment cycle. In the first year, the GEAC evaluated learning outcome data relevant to Goal 1; in the second year, learning outcome data relevant to Goal 2 was evaluated; and in the third year, learning data relevant to Goal 3 was evaluated. This report covers the third year of the first assessment cycle, and thus will address the assessment of student learning outcomes relevant to Goal 3.

Each year GEAC is charged with submitting data-informed recommendations to the Division of Academic and Student Affairs. At the conclusion of each three-year cycle, GEAC will submit an additional report to the Division of Academic and Student Affairs and the General Education Committee. The purpose of each annual report is to make recommendations on the allocation of resources to improve the student learning outcomes of the General Education Program. The triennial report will also make recommendations on any potential structural changes required to improve the quality and effectiveness of the General Education Program.

II. METHODS

The General Education Assessment Plan, which was approved by APSCUF-KU Representative Council, University Senate, and the University Curriculum Committee, mandates that GEAC analyze data collected by departments within which General Education courses are taught. To facilitate this effort, GEAC provided departments with standardized reporting templates that were adapted from the VALUE rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). These templates ask departments to report raw numbers of students demonstrating suggested behavioral achievement and/or quality of work on a descending level of performance, with “4” being the highest performance level and “1” being the lowest level of performance. There is also a “0” category for those failing to achieve the minimum expected level of performance. The templates also ask departments to summarize information about the type of assignment or evaluation instrument used and a description of their criterion of success.

Additionally, a PowerPoint, self-guided instruction about general education assessment, using the reporting rubrics, and report writing was developed by the committee. Volunteers were also given the opportunity to attend an information session or receive individual instruction from a GEAC member to ask questions or for more information in order to facilitate the use of the reporting templates. Instructors were free to propose their own methods of examining student learning, but the results were to be submitted using the approved reporting templates.

All instructors participating in the Year 2 assessments reported direct measures of student learning. However, two courses did not use the template provided or as intended. Future assessment efforts need to reemphasize the use of the standard measure of accomplishment in meeting the domain. Details about the methods used in each of the four Goal 3 domains follows:

- For Domain 3.1, Local and global civic knowledge and engagement, student performance was examined across two different social science courses from one department. In one course, final course grades were used to place students in one of the four performance levels. In the other course, an optional student writing assignment was assessed to assign students to one of the performance categories. The aggregated student data was reported using the template designed by GEAC for the assessment of Domain 3.1. (The reporting template for this and all domains can be found at <http://www.kutztown.edu/gened/GEAC.html#templates>).
- For Domain 3.2, Intercultural knowledge and competence, student performance was examined across four social science courses. One class completed an in-class essay that was used for purposes for this assessment. The other three courses used 10-12 additional questions on the final exam. For two classes the general education exam questions were incorporated into the final exam (one used multiple choice, the other true/false.) The last class used 12 optional true/false final exam questions. The results were reported using the template designed by GEAC for the assessment of Domain 3.2.
- For Domain 3.3, Ethical reasoning and action, student performance was examined across three courses in different disciplines across three Colleges. In one course, a core assignment was used for assessment. In another course students wrote a case study. In the

third course, students were placed in a performance level based on grades received on a paper and a quiz. For one course, the results were submitted to GEAC on the reporting template for Domain 3.3, Ethical reasoning and action. In the other two courses different templates (rubrics) were used, one that was based on the GEAC rubric, and one that was not.

- For Domain 3.4, Personal qualities and attitudes such as passion, curiosity, self-confidence, imagination, cooperation, commitment, and support for life-long learning, student performance was examined across four courses in four different departments. In one course student response to an essay prompt was assessed, in two of the courses students completed a pre- and post-course survey, and in the fourth course, a poster presentation of a semester-long project was assessed. The results were reported using the template designed by GEAC for the assessment of Domain 3.4

Having collected the assessment data from these courses, GEAC analyzed the data, considered recommendations proposed by the assessing departments, and drafted this report to be submitted to the Division of Academic and Student Affairs.

III. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT REPORTS

Core Requirement	Percent Reported at Level 4	Percent Reported at Level 3	Percent Reported at Level 2	Percent Reported at Level 1	Percent Reported at Level 0
3.1	49% (31)	29% (18)	10% (6)	6% (4)	6% (4)
3.2	26% (113)	51% (226)	18% (85)	4% (16)	0% (0)
3.3*	31% (82)	25% (68)	22% (58)	15% (41)	7% (20)
3.4	53% (36)	38% (26)	9% (6)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Total	31%	40%	19%	7%	3%
*data not included from one report (number in parentheses is raw number of students)					

IV. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

As this report was generated using data from Year 3 of the initial assessment cycle for Kutztown University's new General Education Program, it is impossible to identify longitudinal trends. Rather, these data should be seen as a starting point from which future trends may be derived. Nevertheless, the data presented to GEAC (obtained from a total of 840 data points representing student academic performance distributed across 12 courses), and the analyses compiled by the individual departments reveal strengths, as well as areas in which student performance may need to improve. In the absence of benchmarks, of course, it is difficult to make specific recommendations about improvement.

Overall, the data and analyses obtained from our assessment of Goal 3 indicates that approximately 67% of the student sample performed at the highest two levels of understanding (level 3 and 4). What was also true was that many of the courses used to assess student performance in the domains of Goal 3 did not establish a formal benchmark target of success; rather, for this first round of assessment related to Goal 3, faculty simply identified the level at which they judged students performed. The two approaches, establishing a benchmark or summarizing performance levels without establishing a benchmark, were described as appropriate in the training workshops. In some disciplines in previous assessment cycles, faculty were able to draw on benchmarks developed by their professional association.

With this overview of the year 3 findings, we turn now to the assessment of each individual domain.

Domain 3.1 Local and Global Civic Knowledge and Engagement

Two courses were used to assess student performance for Domain 3.1. Both were from a social science program and were from introductory level courses.

Courses – Domain	Performance Levels				
	4	3	2	1	Below 1
3.1					
000 level (2 courses)	49%	29%	10%	6%	6%

Domain 3.2: Intercultural Knowledge and competence

All four courses used for assessing student performance in Domain 3.2 were from a social science department. It is possible to see the progression of student performance in courses offered through one department because their levels varied.

Courses – Domain 3.2	Performance Levels				
	4	3	2	1	Below 1
000 level	27%	47%	21%	4%	0%
100 level	8%	79%	13%	0%	0%
200 level	44%	52%	4%	0%	0%
Total	26%	51%	18%	4%	0%

The assessing instructors of domain 3.1 and 3.2, who were teaching introductory level courses, reported that students were performing at a reasonably high level (greater than 70% at 3 and 4). Instructors for domain 3.1 shared that the department should make a systematic effort to develop standardized evaluation across all classes. They may not use optional papers in future assessments, as voluntary participation can skew the results. For domain 3.2, both instructors of introductory courses used a similar method of dividing students in quartiles based on the number of right answers and assigning levels 1 through 4, indicating a use of ‘relative’ system of assessment. The questions seemed to be at the level of difficulty fit for 000 level courses (only questions suited for performance levels 1 and 2 were used) and therefore we see a higher percentage of students at levels 3 and 4.

For domain 3.2, the instructor of the 100 level course used exam questions as well, but completed the assessment based on the content of the questions (with at least one question suited to each of the four performance levels) to find that “students understood the socially constructed nature of race and ethnicity but had problems distinguishing between personal and social/cultural levels of analysis.” By making it possible for students to achieve a performance level of four, by asking questions at that level, this seems to imply use of a more ‘absolute’ system of assessment. Participation of students in this assessment was voluntary, which may have influenced the outcome.

For domain 3.2, the rubric used to assess students on the written assignment in the 200 level course was not provided, therefore inference cannot be drawn. The table above demonstrates that students seem to progress in achievement level of this goal as the course level advances. Improvement in course content, and/or exams and assignments to better capture the goal was suggested by all instructors assessing domain 3.2, indicating that this process is having a beneficial effect beyond just supplying us with data. Instructors are reflecting on their courses and thinking about improving content as well as assessment methods, indicating ‘value-added’ as a result of participating in assessment process.

Domain 3.3: Ethical Reasoning and Action

Student performance in three courses was assessed, in three separate departments.

	Performance Levels				
Courses – Domain 3.3	4	3	2	1	Below 1
000 level (7 sections)	19%	28%	25%	17%	10%
300 level	69%	11%	6%	6%	
Total	31%	25%	22%	15%	7%

It was not possible for GEAC to analyze students' abilities in meeting the goals of Domain 3.3 due to issues related to the actual assessments in this domain. GEAC is of the opinion that the assessment should clearly differentiate between ethics and morals, and the two seemed to be used interchangeably. Further, providing samples and exemplars of student work, or the actual assessment instruments used in the class, would allow the committee to also analyze the assessments in relation to Domain 3.3. Additionally, one report did not follow the Domain Rubric/Reporting Template and was difficult to interpret. Thus that data was unusable for this report. Students do seem to show strength in this domain, with a higher percentage of students at performance level 3 and 4 in the upper level class (80%) than in the introductory course (47%), as we would expect.

Domain 3.4: Personal qualities and attitudes such as passion, curiosity, self-confidence, imagination, cooperation, commitment, and support for life-long learning.

Student performance in three separate courses was assessed, in three different departments.

	Performance Levels				
Courses – Domain 3.4	4	3	2	1	Below 1
300 level (3 courses)	53%	38%	9%	0	0

In the aggregate, 91% of the students achieved a level 3 or better. Levels 3 and 4 are appropriate for seniors in 300 level courses, which this sample was. Moreover, good results were obtained with the more direct measure (reflection) and thus are not simply a function of the more indirect self-perception. This is a difficult domain to assess, the participating faculty are to be commended. One of the faculty reports indicated that it is not always appropriate to assess students in particular courses, and this issue will be explored in the development of the curriculum map.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

GEAC has organized our recommendations under three headings, addressing proposed changes to the General Education Program, actions by which we can improve the process by which General Education is assessed at Kutztown University, and the allocation of resources for the continuous improvement of General Education.

Structural and/or Curricular Improvements to the General Education Program

A recommendation was made that students be "required to take a course in theoretical or applied ethics as part of a general education program." However, because of the lack of evidence (data), the GEAC committee cannot support this recommendation. In fact, due to the lack of a random stratified sample drawn from the population of courses targeting this goal, GEAC would not recommend any changes to the General Education Program at this time.

GEAC acknowledges, and has explored the idea, that co-curricular experiences also assist students in achieving mastery of the general education learning goals. Future committee work should involve discussions with other divisions on campus who are assessing co-curricular activities.

One instructor recommended that GEAC articulate a way by which thematic courses can assess achievement of the domain of the General Education goal(s) as well as the competency required by the theme. The instructor pointed out that the expectation of the goal and the theme for which the course was approved may not be a perfect fit. GEAC must address the themes/thematic courses in future assessment cycles. The thematic courses are described as providing “students with a common intellectual experience through which they further develop the interdisciplinary skills acquired through the University Core Curriculum and University Distribution Requirements.” Does that mean that courses approved as thematic courses address a particular domain of general education? If this is the case, courses with approved themes can be part of GEAC’s assessment process, by assigning each theme to a particular domain and reporting student performance using that domain’s reporting template. GEAC will address these questions in the next assessment cycle.

Assessment process

The second page of the reporting template allows faculty members to share information about their assessment methods, results of the assessment, and recommendations. This opportunity for input in an open response format provides GEAC with the necessary information to evaluate the data and support recommendations for change. It is the desire of the GEAC Committee that the assessment methods will consist of something that measures specific learning objects and not simply the final grade for the course. Faculty responses on page two of the report were less than satisfactory in quantity and quality for some domains during this assessment cycle, offering GEAC very little to work with. While assessment procedures and processes are relatively new to the faculty, particularly when it comes to assessment of General Education goals, the GEAC Committee needs substantive data to complete the process, including significant detail about their assessment procedures and results on the second page of the template. In the future, participants will be encouraged to put more effort into the assessment effort, including suggestions for improvements to the general education assessment process, and completion of page two of the template. Professors of 18 courses were asked to participate in this round of assessment. Data was received for 12 courses. In the future GEAC hopes for greater participation.

The importance of including assessment questions in mandatory, not voluntary, exams was acknowledged. While we appreciate the fact that in large classrooms, multiple choice and True/False exams may be a practical way of assessing the domains of a goal, use of other methods alongside exams would enable instructors to capture “articulation” and “interpretation.” The committee encourages the use of reflection essays/assignments as these might be very appropriate ways for faculty to assess the presence of personal qualities for life-long learning. These qualities are essential to achieving success in Domain 3.4.

Some instructors of courses at the 000 level identified the need for exam questions to cover a range of difficulty, reflecting the levels on the GEAC template. Students in a 000 level class would not be expected to achieve at performance level 4, but the assessment process should offer an opportunity for students to perform at level 4, the highest level. We need to clarify to all instructors across campus to use the

'absolute' approach to general education assessment, in which all students are held to a common standard as articulated by the template for each domain. It should be acknowledged that there are questions and concerns about assessing an introductory class and a capstone class, for example, with the same criteria. Faculty have neither the same class sizes nor the same expectations in these two types of classes. As GEAC further develops the General Education assessment process, this must be taken into consideration. This absolute approach will, however, enable us to observe the progress of students from introductory courses to senior courses. Once we standardize the assessment process, we will be able to identify areas of the General Education curriculum that we are delivering effectively and areas where improvement and change may be needed. Most importantly, we will be able to report the proportion of students who have achieved a particular level of mastery for each University goal and domain.

Another overarching recommendation is the reiteration for instructors to use the rubrics recommended by GEAC in order to accurately assess the domain. While training about the rubrics and their use and assistance is offered, faculty may still be reticent to use the reporting templates. In future training, it will be stressed that data presented in a rubric other than that provided by GEAC will not be included in GEAC's analysis. If faculty submit data in another format, they will be asked to resubmit the data using the appropriate reporting template.

GEAC's goal in this third pilot year was to not rely on volunteers, but to have a random, stratified sample of courses represented. In order to facilitate this, GEAC started to develop a curriculum map which identifies courses that address specific domains of general education. A database was developed (by a computer science student) that can create a random, stratified sample of courses for specified domains. The curriculum map is in a very early stage, however, and we were not able to generate a random sample. However, we do have a rudimentary idea of which courses address which domain and we attempted to recruit participants for six courses per domain, for a total of twenty-four courses. We received data for twelve courses, just half of our goal. We had two volunteers use the reporting templates in a different manner than intended. Therefore, the GEAC also recommends that we need to take further steps to formalize and increase our training efforts related to the use of reporting templates, providing mentors or guides to help instructors throughout data collection and reporting efforts, and establishing administrative consequences for those who fail to participate in assessment efforts. To accomplish this goal, however, we will need to work carefully with the Office of Assessment and the Division of Academic and Student Affairs as we are asking for major commitments of time on the part of the GEAC membership when most of the members do not receive any relief from their teaching, scholarship, or other service activities. Development of the curriculum map should also continue, and this project is discussed below.

Resource Allocation to Improve General Education

GEAC commends the Division of Academic and Student Affairs for funding previous general education assessment efforts, including the annual conference/workshop on general education assessment. We encourage them to continue supporting these endeavors as we believe there is sufficient data to show the advance in the culture of assessment across campus is directly tied to this support.

One area in which more support is needed is in the development of a curriculum map. GEAC requests the assistance of a Computer Science student, supervised by a faculty member in the Department of Computer

Science, to further develop the curriculum map and use it to create a sustainable database for GEAC's use. GEAC would like the curriculum map to generate a random, stratified sample of courses that address a particular domain. There should also be procedures and methods in place to update the curriculum map as courses change, or as courses are added and deleted. This project will be require more time than a volunteer should be required to spend; GEAC respectfully requests funding for a student to complete this work.