

# **The Assessment Process**

## **Foundation Courses and First Year Seminar Courses**

The departments responsible for designing and teaching the Foundation courses are also given the responsibility for assessing the outcomes. The General Education Committee reviews these outcomes periodically, in discussion with the University Assessment Committee.

During the appropriate part of the assessment cycle, the relevant departments report summary statistics to the General Education Committee to aid in the assessment of the overall program. These include: number of students who have taken the courses, course grade distributions, exit/final exam grade distributions, and whatever other measures they have accumulated.

The Elliott School of Communication reports the results of their pre-test/post-test of students' self-reported attitudes regarding speech competency and both the instrument used and the cumulative scores for the persuasive policy speech required of all students in Communication 111.

The English Department reports numbers of students in the composition courses, diagnostic exam scores administered the first week of classes, the grade distributions in the courses and on the exit exams.

The Mathematics Department reports the percent of students receiving a passing grade in the mathematics courses MATH 111 and MATH 131.

The University Libraries has created a series of online library tutorials for the First Year Seminar classes which introduce students to library services, resources, and best practices for research and citation. The tutorials are part of the support offered by the library for First Year Seminars. Faculty can choose to assign library tutorials for their classes. Responses from students who complete the tutorials are used as one component of ongoing assessment in relation to the library skills learning outcome for First Year Seminars: "identify appropriate library and other resources to facilitate research and accurately provide citations."

### **Divisional & Additional Courses**

Assessment of the rest of the general education program (including further assessment of the Foundation courses) is accomplished through 1) program monitoring, 2) tracking outcomes, and 3) other institutional feedback.

## **General Education Program monitoring**

In order to determine the extent to which the various courses are contributing as they should to the general education program, the curriculum approval process (CIM) includes reviewing general education course information regarding:

1. The ways in which the course addresses all of the goals of the program
2. How the goals are reflected in course assignments
3. The percentage of the course grade that is derived from assignments directly related to general education goals.

Instructors are asked to provide this information in course syllabi.

One of the goals of the program (to gain a basic understanding of the natural sciences, social and behavioral sciences, humanities and fine arts) is addressed in the structure of the program, which requires students to take Divisional and Additional courses in the various broad fields of inquiry. In addition, the General Education Committee uses a General Education Course Proposal Form and the course syllabi to determine the appropriateness of a course for the program and the extent to which the course addresses this goal. Since such courses will vary in the extent to which they can address all four outcomes, the course review process conducted by the general education committee includes a matrix in which the general education goals and corresponding course outcomes are identified.

## **Tracking Outcomes**

The outcomes of the program are determined in three ways.

1. Course grade distributions are a measure of the outcomes of the Foundation courses. This is appropriate because each department teaching a Foundation class has a rubric (that is shared with students) for evaluating outcomes. The departments teaching the courses provide grade distributions, including withdrawals, and an analysis of problems encountered in ensuring that students are achieving the appropriate learning outcomes.
2. The General Education committee consults with the University Assessment Committee to review other assessment findings and metrics related to student learning outcomes relevant to general education.
3. Individual departments provide data to the general education committee as part of the regular program assessment cycle. Instructors who teach General Education courses provide appropriate assessment of student learning outcomes, including (but not limited to) pretest-posttest models. Every undergraduate program is reviewed on a four-year cycle, and this review includes an assessment of general education courses.

## **Institutional Feedback**

In order to monitor and improve the program, we have designed a set of feedback processes that allow all parts of the university that affect general education to learn from one another. Faculty members who teach general education courses are asked to report outcomes once every four

years. At the time when their input is requested, they are also be asked for comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

The general education committee meets yearly with academic advisors to obtain feedback from them regarding the program and to provide them with whatever feedback the committee obtains from faculty. Similarly, the general education committee includes a representative from the library as a member of the committee, and the library member consults with other library faculty to provide feedback on library research skills. The committee has access to the annual reports from exceptions committees to monitor waiver of general education requirements.

### **Schedule**

The general education committee completes an assessment report that is submitted to the Faculty Senate in the spring semester. The report with any recommendations for change is presented to the senate for consideration prior to taking any recommendations to the general faculty. Any changes approved by the general faculty will be instituted in the next academic year.

In the fall semester, the relevant departments gather the outcomes data. In the spring semester, a report with any recommendations for change is presented to the Faculty Senate for consideration prior to taking any recommendations to the general faculty later in the semester. Any changes approved by the general faculty will be instituted in the following version of the undergraduate catalog.

Assessment of the general education program is accomplished in a variety of ways, with a diversity of measures. Each year, the General Education Assessment Report is published for tracking and trend purposes.

### General Education Outcomes