

Review of Fall 2016 General Education Tier One and Tier Two Syllabi for Learning Outcomes, Assessment of Learning and the Writing Requirement

The current General Education (GE) program was approved in 1998 by Faculty Senate. Proposed courses, after rigorous review of criteria, were given the general education attribute. As the program progressed, learning outcomes for each category of classes as well as for the program overall were developed and approved. Since then, although there have been several attempts to conduct a formal review of courses, there has never been an assessment of the GE program outcomes, nor have courses been re-evaluated to ensure they are maintaining the requirements of the program. In 2010, there was a concerted effort to increase reporting on student learning outcomes in all programs across campus, and in 2011, learning outcomes assessment was added to the Academic Program Review process. However, because the GE Program spans the entire undergraduate curriculum, that “program” is not attached to any one department or college. Therefore, there has been no medium through which we could measure student learning outcomes, or ensure the quality of the course offerings. Consequently, in order to get an assessment/review process in place, a team of 5 people participated in the 2015 Association of American Colleges & Universities’ Institute on General Education Assessment. During this institute, an action plan with three goals was developed for the assessment and recertification of the general education program/courses at the University of Arizona.

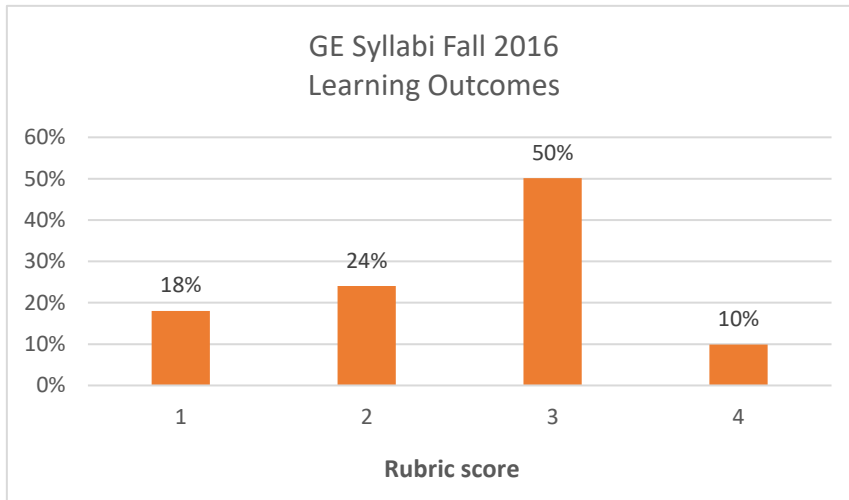
3 goals from AAC&U Institute

1. Develop a general education program assessment plan.
2. Develop a general education course recertification process.
3. Develop a general education program communication plan.

These goals and their details were shared and discussed with the University-Wide General Education Committee (UWGEC) and it was determined that a pilot study was needed. This pilot was conducted in the 2015 fall semester with 3 Tier One courses, one from each category, that had multiple sections and instructors. We had a 60% response rate. In the first phase of the pilot, the faculty were asked to report on individual course learning outcomes and how they aligned with the overall GE outcomes, as well as listing the activities for these assessments. In phase two, the faculty were asked to report on the actual evidence or findings of the GE outcomes and any resulting changes. It was clear after reviewing the data received from phase two that the faculty did not completely understand what was expected of them. For example, based on his findings, one instructor recommended a university-wide change, not a change for his class; getting data took a personal approach from sub-committee members in certain areas; and it was also difficult to standardize the information. However, the following are the committee’s recommendations from the pilot study:

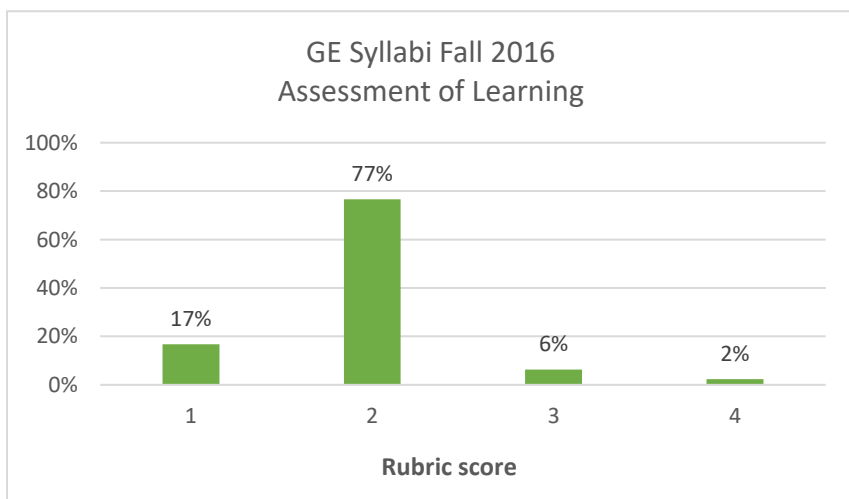
- Re-certification process needs to come first with embedded outcomes assessment
 - Process should be very standardized with a template requesting information
 - Provide generic rubrics that help measure the four overarching GE outcomes for instructors to use
 - Provide supports such as the writing assessment workshops and/or resources webpages
 - Will require an intensive effort to recertify all GE courses within the first few years
 - Can exclude any courses that have been approved within the last 5 years
 - Focus on oldest courses first
- Two communication plans
 - One for faculty
 - Should include open forums or brown bags to introduce recertification process and learning outcome assessment
 - General Education Monthly Newsletter
 - One for students to highlight the importance of general education
 - Perhaps to include rebranding: GE as “Wildcat Core”

In light of the pilot study findings and after discussion with the Senior Vice-Provost of Academic Affairs, the timetable was shifted a little to give more lead time for the actual assessment and recertification process. Therefore, to start the process, a request went out before the fall, 2016 semester began for all GE faculty to send their syllabi from the previous spring, 2016 and the upcoming fall semester, 2016. Since fall was the upcoming, current semester, the initial focus was on obtaining all of those syllabi. As of Nov. 15, 2016, 340 out of 347 syllabi have been collected and reviewed. The Tools and Assessment subcommittee of UWGEC created a scoring rubric for three specific areas: Learning Outcomes, Assessment of Learning, and the Writing Requirement. Initial results are presented in the following graphs.



These data indicate that the majority of the faculty teaching GE have some level of learning outcomes listed or embedded in the syllabus, however very few actually align them with the overall GE program learning outcomes.

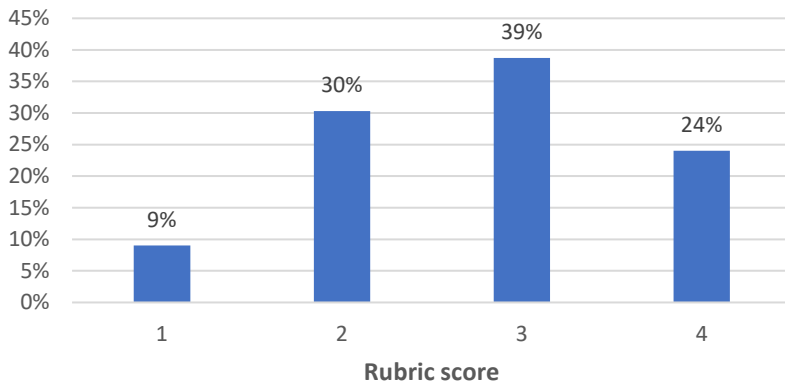
Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
Syllabus does not include any version of student learning outcomes, objectives, or goals for the class, nor is there any mention of the four general education program learning outcomes.	Syllabus has some level of learning outcomes, objectives or goals, but they are not written in a measurable format, or they are not aligned with the general education program learning outcomes.	Syllabus has learning outcomes, objectives or goals, most of which are measurable, however, they do not align with the general education program learning outcomes.	Syllabus has clear, measurable learning outcomes, objectives or goals and they are aligned with the general education program learning outcomes.



The data reflecting assessment of learning indicate that although most GE instructors have assessments (assignments, exams, etc.) listed in the syllabus, very few are explicitly aligned with course or program learning outcomes.

Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
There are no formal learning assessment activities listed in the syllabus. In the absence of clear and measurable learning outcomes, this criterion receives a 1.	There are some assessment activities listed in the syllabus, but it is not clear how they are aligned with outcomes.	Assessment activities are aligned with course outcomes, but do not align with general education program student learning outcomes.	Assessment activities are aligned with both course and program learning outcomes. (These activities may be embedded in course assignments and/or exams.)

GE Syllabi Fall 2016
Writing Requirement



It appears that most faculty are fulfilling the GE writing requirement in some fashion. Of the 9% that received a score of 1, one faculty member clearly stated that he/she does not have writing in the class due to the class size. Most of the others in that category did not have complete syllabi or clearly did not meet the minimum amount of writing required.

1	2	3	4
<p>Writing assignments are not integrated in the course requirements or there is no writing assignment involving a revision process or writing assignments do not add up to a minimum of 10 pages or 2500 words over the term.</p>	<p>Writing assignments are integrated in the course requirements however it is unclear as to how they are evaluated for format, organization, style, grammar, and punctuation, as well as content or there may not be at least one writing assignment involving a revision process before submitting a subsequent draft for grading. Writing assignments add up to a minimum of 10 pages or 2500 words over the term.</p>	<p>Writing assignments are integrated in the course requirements but do not include multiple assignments or writing assignments are evaluated for format, organization, style, grammar, and punctuation, but not necessarily content or analysis or at least one writing assignment involves a revision process in which students receive instructor and/or peer feedback on a first draft and make substantive revisions before submitting a subsequent draft for grading. Writing assignments add up to a minimum of 10 pages or 2500 words over the term, but it is not clear if one or more writing assignments of at least 750 words is done outside of the class session.</p>	<p>Writing assignments, both formal and informal, are integrated in the course requirements through more than one means. Writing assignments emphasize critical inquiry--through attention to the process of writing. Writing assignments are evaluated for format, organization, style, grammar, and punctuation, as well as content and participation in the scholarly conversation. At least one writing assignment involves a revision process in which students receive instructor and/or peer feedback on a first draft and make substantive revisions before submitting a subsequent draft for grading. Writing assignments may vary in number and length but add up to a minimum of 10 pages or 2500 words over the term. One or more writing assignments of at least 750 words is to be done outside of the class session.</p>