

MEMORANDUM

January 27, 2011

TO: Academic Programs Committee
Faculty Senate

FROM: General Education Curriculum Committee
Herbert Koerselman, Chair

ABOUT: Five-year Report through 2010

“The General Education Program at the University of Louisville fosters active learning by asking students to think critically, to communicate effectively, and to understand and appreciate cultural diversity.”

The work of the committee addresses three major focus areas, which are detailed below:

1. The approval of courses meeting the general-education requirements (GER);
2. The development of an assessment process, partly in response to SACS accreditation requirements; and
3. The consideration of recommendations to the provost and the units concerning general-education policy and practice issues (e.g., unmet need for GER courses).

Ordinary Business: Approving Courses to Meet GER

The GECC, as the successor to a previous committee that reviewed proposals for new courses to be included in the general education curriculum each academic year, continues to have such review and approval as its primary function. The proposal deadline is November 15. Generally the time line for reviewing all general education course proposals is November/December in the fall semester but not later than January in the spring semester to allow time for administrative work to list the new courses. Approved courses are effective in the following summer term. As the roster of courses has increased, the annual rate of submission has slowed; in the early years of this review cycle, the need for additional Cultural Diversity (CD) courses brought in many additions. At the present time there are more than 200 courses on the general education website.

General Education Curriculum Committee through 2010

Academic Year	Submitted Reviewed	Approved	Rejected
2004-05	11	11	0
2005-06	11	11	0
2006-07	8	5	3
2007-08	3	2	1
2008-09	7	6	1
2009-10	5	4	1
2010-11	9	9	0

Current Focus of the GECC

Reviewing syllabi for possible course migration

It is not uncommon for courses to evolve over a period of time. The GECC is in the process of reviewing all syllabi for general education courses to ensure that courses continue to meet the guidelines for which they were initially approved. This process involves the development of a template, training sessions for the readers and a concentrated effort to determine whether courses are continuing to meet their original requirements for approval. The syllabi have been collected and the committee expects to complete this task during the 2010-11 academic year.

Proactive Initiatives by the GECC

Dissemination of syllabus guidelines to new faculty/part timers

In order to ensure consistency with approved courses, the GECC has provided new and part-time faculty with guidelines for syllabi for general education courses.

General Education Assessment

A good assessment system will be critical to our success in making continual improvements in the general education program. General education assessment is not going to go away. Assessment of student learning outcomes is a national expectation in higher education, in response to calls for increased accountability. – Shirley Willihnganz

Assessment is also important because general education is a key area that SACS evaluates. The SACS standard reads, “Evidence must be shown that graduates have attained the established competencies within the university-wide general education core (arts & humanities, social & behavioral sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics).”

As an ongoing initiative, the General Education Curriculum Committee, in consultation with other faculty members, has designed rubrics to measure effective communication, cultural diversity, and critical thinking. The critical thinking rubrics are subdivided into three areas: humanities and social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics. The rubrics were designed by

drawing on the outcomes listed for those areas in the general education program description. For additional information on the process for assessment, please consult the website:

http://louisville.edu/provost/GER/GenEd_FAQ.pdf

The assessment of critical thinking skills was noted positively by the COC-SACS Report of the Reaffirmation Committee, April 10-12, 2007, p.6.

The direct measures of critical thinking are outstanding, particularly the rubric that was designed by faculty. The plan calls for readers (who should be faculty) to use the rubric in assessing 1) a sample of assignments from the freshmen orientation course, 2) a sample of general education assignments, and 3) assignments from the culminating experience. Since all assignments do not necessarily elicit evidence of critical thinking, the assignments chosen from both the freshmen orientation classes and the general education classes should be designed so that students will respond using appropriate critical thinking skills.

As of spring 2010, all departments offering general education courses have been assessed once. Dr. Michelle Robinson was project coordinator for the first round of assessments through all the departments. Ms. Joy Karega, an English doctoral student, now serves as project coordinator. The second round of assessments has begun with the review of Written Communication courses in English, for which the LiveText system (to collect and assess electronically) will be used.

For a detailed report on the first round of assessments, please refer to Appendix A.

Challenges for the GECC in the Assessment of General Education Courses

Most members of the GECC had little or no experience with curriculum assessment, which often meant that a great deal of education and training had to take place before the process could move forward. In addition, training of individual readers was required each semester. Rubrics for the assessment process had to be created and approved by the committee, which was challenging, particularly when some committee members had little experience with theories of assessment.

The levels of cooperation from various departments varied widely. Some departments were helpful and efficient, also supplying readers for the scoring of documents. The attitudes and responses of other departments were more suspicious or apathetic, which created more work for the committee. Similar attitudes hindered other GECC initiatives such as syllabus review and the review of frequency of course offerings.

Unsettled issues

In an effort to secure approval by faculty, the first round of assessment was done in a way that could not be punitive to faculty should the assessment show problems or other negative issues. However, as the assessment took shape, it became clear that many faculty members had a desire to know how their students scored on the assessment. With the second round of assessments underway, this topic may need to be revisited.

SACS Accreditation Reporting

A progress report is due to SACS in 2013; it will include information about the progress of the general education assessment project.

Policy and Practice Issues

Degree audit and programs.

The GECC is involved with degree program or audit policy only as applied to general education courses, in transfer equivalencies, credit by examination or compliance with general education guidelines and mandates. Currently the GECC does consider petitions for alternative cultural diversity courses but not for any other general education coursework.

Frequency of course offering issues

The GECC monitors the frequency with which courses approved for the general education program are offered. The general education program guidelines state that approved CD courses must be offered every other year and all other approved courses yearly. In 2007 when a survey of courses was conducted, seventeen departments had courses not offered on that schedule and five courses were expunged from the approved course listing. A&S periodically cleans up their course inventory, and the GECC agreed that all academic units should take ownership of this administrative monitoring task.

Subcommittees of GECC

Course Proposal Subcommittee (2004-)

The GECC created the Course Proposal Subcommittee in order to reduce the workload of the rest of the members so that the additional business of the committee can be completed. It meets in the fall semester of each year and reviews proposals submitted by departments for inclusion in the General Education Curriculum. The work of the subcommittee takes place once the deadline (November 15) has passed for course submissions. The Course Proposal Subcommittee presents its recommendations to the GECC annually.

Assessment Subcommittee (2005-)

The charge for this committee was to address ongoing assessment issues and the development of assessment instruments. It meets as needed.

Rubrics Subcommittee (2005-)

This committee meets as needed to review rubrics for Critical Thinking assessment and specific disciplines. In 2009, chaired by Michelle Robinson, the committee met to bring the language of the rubrics in line with the Paul-Elder model.

CD Petitions Subcommittee (2009-)

This committee was developed to review petitions for Cultural Diversity (CD) credit. Petition forms were developed for the following areas: Transfer Course, Study Abroad, and Life Experience. The initial subcommittee developed guidelines and a rubric, refined the submission and review process, set time lines for submission and response complete with templates for both rejections and approvals, and worked with Admissions to post the petitions forms and guidelines on the GECC website.

Administrative Support and Resources

For conducting its business, all members of the GECC receive a well-organized reference binder that details numerous policy and procedural guidelines, a listing of members and support personnel, and other pertinent information such as a time line for the general education course approval process. Much of the same information is accessible to the university community at the general education web site <http://louisville.edu/provost/GER> . Other unit web pages frequented by students are linked to this site.

Posted documents on the general education web site include:

- curriculum guidelines/policies, the program description and learning outcomes, approved general education course listings with course codes,
- the committee charge and structure,
- minutes of the GECC meetings,
- petitions for cultural diversity credit,
- a description of general education assessment and related FAQ's and the assessment rubrics,
- proposal guidelines, course proposal templates for each content/competency area, a proposal cover sheet, general education syllabus guidelines, a list of model proposals, and a link to the CIF (course inventory form).

Other sources of reference may occasionally include the general education section of the on-line catalog, the i2a site when referencing such information as the critical thinking model and university-wide syllabus content guidelines, and the state transfer policy guidelines (also included in the general education reference binder).

The most important resources available to the GECC are the support people who so ably serve the committee in numerous roles.

- Michelle Robinson served as project director for the first round of assessments for courses in the general education curriculum. Much work had to be done to develop rubrics, secure readers, work with the various departments on schedules, and developing follow-up reports and the results of the assessment.
- Jody Reed has been a resource person for degree audit from the Office of Undergraduate Advising Practice.

- Cathy Bays serves as the Ideas to Action (i2a) Specialist for Assessment from the Delphi Center
- Kathy Carden is the staff support person for the GECC who serves as a resource person with vast institutional memory regarding general education policies and procedures. She also staffs the course proposal subcommittee and coordinates that process.
- Mindy Steinberg is a resource person regarding matters relating to transfer regulations, CD waivers, and other matters.
- Julia Dietrich is a non-voting committee member who brings wisdom and also historical perspective to the discussions. She also serves on state-wide committees whose work often affects the business of the GECC.
- Dale Billingsley, Vice Provost, serves as a guide and resource person for what the committee can or cannot do as it applies to our mission. His extensive knowledge of university policies and procedures provides the committee with important information and insight.
- Joy Karega is the newest support person who serves as the project coordinator for the second round of assessments of the general education curriculum. She also collaborated with Michelle Robinson in the drafting of the first-cycle assessment report and coordinates the CD petition process.

Many other unnamed individuals have served the committee as non-voting members, on subcommittees or as readers and table leaders in the assessment process.

Additional Significant Challenges for the GECC

CD course petitions

Because of the increasing number and variety of international learning opportunities enjoyed by our students and encouraged by the university, recently the GECC initiated a process for reviewing petitions for cultural diversity credit in three areas: transfer course, study abroad, and life experience. While this provision is intended to accommodate students and while the guidelines for petitions are clearly stated on the GECC website, this process is still being refined to ensure it meets the intent and learning outcomes of the cultural diversity requirement and serves the students who deserve consideration for exceptions.

The petition process for CD courses has also led to renewed requests for exceptions to other courses in the general education curriculum; however, the GECC continues to maintain the policy structure of the faculty-approved program.

State mandates

Recent state mandates for transferability of courses may have considerable benefit for students;

it appears that the general education curriculum now offered by the University of Louisville will not be adversely affected by this mandate. There is also considerable pressure to increase the number of options for credit by examination. If more students earn general education credit by examination, the pressure for space in some general education courses may be lessened.

HB 160, passed by the Kentucky General Assembly, originally included provisions to cap baccalaureate programs at 120 hours. This provision was removed in conference, but credit-hour limits may be considered in future sessions, especially as the pressure for “out in four” graduation continues. Despite some reductions in general-education required hours at our sister institutions, collaborative work by the institutions and the CPE to base programs statewide on common “learning outcomes” (rather than particular course requirements) permits the UofL program to remain intact.

Other Accomplishments of the GECC

- CD Petition Forms
- General Education Assessment
- Appointment of Assessment Coordinator
- Posting of assessment information and tools/rubrics on general education website
- Development of course proposal templates and proposal packet forms and process
- Implementation of time line for course approval process, coordinated with internal CIF deadlines and state course inventory reports
- Revision of CIF forms, working with the Registrar, to include pertinent general education course descriptions and code designations and policy regarding the routing of the forms for GECC sign-off
- Refining of all general education policy, procedure, and syllabus guideline documents following the implementation of a university-wide general education program
- Initiation of semester reminders to faculty to include learning outcomes in all sections of general education course syllabi
- Coordination with transfer office personnel and state transfer representatives regarding various transfer credit issues
- Coordination with advisors, academic departments and student service offices to make general education guidelines and course listings readily accessible with links to the general education web site

General Education Curriculum Committee through 2010

- Initiation of the General Education Reference Manual
- Coordination and alignment with i2a outcomes and framework
- Revision of the general education critical thinking assessment rubric to more intentionally incorporate the language from the Paul-Elder critical thinking model.

Appendix A

**General Education Curriculum Committee
Assessment Report 2005-2008**

Introduction: Assessment of student learning outcomes is a national expectation in higher education, and the expectations are calls for increased accountability. Section 2.7.3 of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' (SACS) accreditation standards requires in each undergraduate program the successful completion of a general education component that:

- 1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree,
- 2) ensures breadth of knowledge,
- 3) is based on a coherent rationale.

Section 3.5.1 of the SACS accreditation standards also requires that “the institution identifies college –level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.”

Based on these standards, in 2005, the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC) initiated an assessment program to assess student performance in the competencies stated in the preamble of the general education plan: “The general education program at the University of Louisville fosters active learning by asking students to:

- 1) think critically,
- 2) to communicate effectively,
- 3) and understand and appreciate cultural diversity.”

Focusing on these three competencies provided a more achievable goal for the initial assessment phase as opposed to assessing seven different content areas (Arts and Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Oral Communication, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Written Communication, and Cultural Diversity), each with multiple outcomes. Moreover, the focus on the three general competencies aided the GECC in compiling baseline data and snapshots of the general education program as a whole. Furthermore, the three general competencies allowed the GECC to demonstrate for SACS their commitment to developing and implementing an effective assessment model for assessing learning outcomes that are listed prominently in the program description. In April 2007, the GECC’s efforts were heralded by the COC-SACS Report of the Reaffirmation Committee: “The direct measures of critical thinking are outstanding, particularly the rubric designed by faculty.”

All university departments offering General Education courses have completed assessment for the first phase of the Assessment Project. This report summarizes the assessment process and results for the first phase, excluding data collected from the natural sciences and other departments which were selected for assessment but had curriculum designs which were not readily assessable using the current assessment model (i.e., Economics, Geography and Geological Sciences).

Assessment Design: In 2004, the General Education Curriculum Committee formed an Assessment Subcommittee for the purpose of developing and implementing a university-wide assessment plan for the general education program. Following a review of general education practices and models from departmental units and other institutions, the Assessment Subcommittee developed the following guidelines:

- the process should assess the general education program, not specific GER courses,
- the process should assess the general education program as a whole, not individual faculty members, departments, and students,
- the process should assess only general education coursework done by students who complete their GER's at UofL (not transfers),
- the process should use student course work produced in classroom environments,
- the process should not assess course content, nor look at the course grade, or identify the instructor and student,
- the process should use broad-based competency rubrics to assess sample student-work,
- the process should use faculty readers to assess sample student-work.

In February 2005, an Assessment Logistics Subgroup was formed to develop an assessment model reflecting these guidelines, and an Assessment Rubrics Subgroup was formed to develop scoring rubrics for the three competency measures. A part-time coordinator was hired to orchestrate logistics, and a team of faculty from the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD), with expertise in assessment practices, was consulted to assist with the implementation of the assessment model and the development of scoring rubrics. Modifications were made to the model for the assessment of documents from the mathematics department and for natural science courses. A standard assignment type was used for natural science courses, a lab report, and for each mathematics course, selected students' responses to similar mathematical problems were collected for the assessment project. The Assessment Rubrics Subgroup developed separate scoring rubrics for assessing documents from the mathematics department and natural science courses, and over the course of phase one, modified the competency rubrics as necessary.

Assessment Administration: The GECC conducted its first assessment in fall 2005. Throughout phase one, samples of student work were collected from all departments offering courses in the general education curriculum. The collection was conducted on a rotating schedule. The departments offering courses in the general education curriculum received notice of their selection in the semester prior to their assessment. Faculty and instructors were permitted to choose which assignment would be submitted and to identify which competencies each assignment demonstrated, but the names of the students selected were taken from rosters generated by the Registrar's Office after the final drop date of each semester. In order to generate a sampling of approximately 25% of the student population, every fourth student's name appearing on the alphabetic roster was manually selected by the assessment coordinator.

Assessors were originally recruited through the nomination of deans and department chairs campus-wide. As the assessment project gained recognition, assessors were also recruited from tenured and tenure-track faculty, instructors, and graduate teaching assistants who were interested in participating. One week prior to the assessment reading, assessors were brought together for a four hour training session conducted by the team of CEHD faculty that assisted with the development of the assessment model. In that training session, assessors work-shopped the various criteria listed on each rubric and performed a variety of sample readings on benchmark student samples. For each competency measure, assessors were trained to assign a score ranging from one to four: 1-not evident; 2-minimally evident; 3-occasionally evident; 4-clearly evident. In addition, assessors were trained to assign a score of "X" to indicate when an assignment prompt did not require students to demonstrate a particular competency measure. The following week, usually on a Saturday, assessors were brought together for an intense eight hour reading day. Assessors were given the numbered folders which contained assignment sheets and student samples. Each folder was assessed by two assessors sitting in separate reading environments. After the second assessment was complete, score sheets were tallied. If scores received from each assessor presented more than a one point variance, the document was given to a member of the assessment training team for a third assessment and resolution. At the close of each assessment reading, score sheets were manually entered into spreadsheets in preparation for statistical analysis.

Critical Thinking Results: From 2005-2008, 1093 student artifacts were assessed by a diverse range of faculty members, instructors, and doctoral graduate teaching assistants using the critical thinking rubric developed by the Assessment Rubrics Subgroup. Out of a maximum score of 4, the average score was 2.56 (2.76 for demonstrating recognition of the problem or question; 2.65 for using reasoning, arguments, and evidence; 2.44 for drawing conclusions based on reasons, arguments, and evidence; and 2.39 for showing awareness of multiple points of view, when appropriate).

The 2007 assessment involved only general education courses in mathematics; the critical thinking rubric was revised for this assessment. Therefore, the results of this assessment were not analyzed and combined with the results for phase one. For three of the four competency measures, out of a maximum score of 4, average scores ranged from 3.08 to 3.18; the average score for drawing conclusions based on evaluation was 2.87.

Effective Communication Results: From 2005-2008, 864 student artifacts were assessed by a diverse range of faculty members, instructors, and doctoral graduate teaching assistants using the effective communication rubric developed by the Assessment Rubrics Subgroup. Out of a maximum score of 4, the average score was 2.73 (2.87 for articulating purpose and employing tone consistent with purpose; 2.71 for clarity and coherent organization; 2.51 for demonstrating analysis or synthesis; and 2.83 for using appropriate conventions and style).

Cultural Diversity Results: From 2005-2008, 692 student artifacts were assessed by a diverse range of faculty members, instructors, and doctoral graduate teaching assistants using the cultural diversity rubric developed by the Assessment Rubrics Subgroup. Out of a maximum score of 4, the average score was 2.18 (2.38 for recognizing that culture shapes behavior and attitudes; 2.22 for demonstrating ability to understand the relationship of culture to its environment and history;

2.04 for recognizing cultural groups as internally diverse; and 2.10 for bringing awareness of cultural diversity to the analysis of problems or issues).

Challenges and Limitations: As the assessment project was emerging and developing, the GECC was revising the process. Throughout phase one, the Assessment Subcommittee and the Assessment Logistics Subgroup were able to identify several challenges and limitations:

1. Most members of the GECC had little or no experience with curriculum assessment, which often meant a great deal of education and training on assessment theory and practice had to take place before the process could move forward. In addition, training of individual assessors had to take place every semester.
2. The General Education curriculum and learning outcomes for specific subjects were not created with the realities of assessment in mind. Consequently, the Assessment Subcommittee and the Assessment Rubric Subgroup were not able to draw on the content area learning outcomes for assessment, but had to focus on the broad learning outcomes mentioned in the preamble of the General Education document. The broadness of those categories created challenges both in the development of credible assessment rubrics and in the communication of the process to faculty and department chairs.
3. There were limited models to use for reference for the process and there were limited rubrics available from other General Education assessment programs within the university (with the exception of a pilot program in the Composition Program). Consequently, rubrics for the assessment process had to be created and approved by the committee.
4. The levels of cooperation from departments varied widely. Some departments were helpful and efficient, also supplying assessors for the scoring of documents. Other departments' attitudes were more suspicious or apathetic.

Future Plans: Future plans for the General Education Assessment project have been discussed by the 2010-2011 General Education Curriculum Committee. The GECC is considering three primary questions:

- 1) What do the phase one assessment results tell us about the General Education Program and students' performance in the program with respect to the stated learning outcomes?
- 2) Based on these results, how can we improve the General Education Program and student performance in general education courses with respect to the stated learning outcomes?
- 3) How can we improve the General Education assessment process?

Based on these questions, the GECC has developed four stated objectives. First, data from the natural sciences assessment will be added to the comprehensive phase one report. Second, the comprehensive results from phase one will be interpreted by the GECC.

Third, the assessment of the general education program will continue as an ongoing university-wide initiative. The GECC has begun phase two of the assessment project. In an effort to make this process more environmentally friendly, GECC will be piloting a new process for the collection and assessment of documents this fall. The College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) has been successfully using Live Text for outcomes assessment for a number of years, and the Live Text company has worked with the Assessment Subcommittee to develop a tool that fits the GECC's assessment model from phase one. The use of this software will allow the submission and assessment of all assignments and student samples electronically, saving time and other valuable resources; it will also allow the GECC to generate detailed aggregated data reports.

Fourth, the Assessment Subcommittee will consider ways in which it can improve upon the assessment process. Areas under review by the Assessment Subcommittee will include the sampling process and data reporting. As the GECC begins phase two of the assessment process, the Assessment Subcommittee is considering the use of cross disciplinary sampling reflective of students at varying stages of their matriculation through the General Education Program. Also, the Assessment Subcommittee is considering a plan for data reporting which will make the process transparent to departments in future assessments.

Appendix B

University-Wide General Education Curriculum Committee

A. Function

To oversee the implementation and ongoing development of the University-Wide General Education Program and to review and study the overall program and the courses offered by:

Writing guidelines and setting procedures for the submission and approval of courses for the General Education Program, for issues affecting transfer students and students who entered under the previous General Education Program and as needed for continuous improvement, in accordance with the General Education Content and Competency Areas and their respective Learning Outcomes.

Developing procedures for transfer students to appeal determinations of non-approved general education credits of course work taken at other institutions.

Making all relevant guidelines and policies available to faculty and advisors.

Developing, overseeing implementation of, and reviewing assessment measures.

Changing the General Education Program as needed for continuous improvement or as mandated by changes to University, CPE or SACS requirements, and bringing them to the Undergraduate Council for presentation to the Provost.

Reviewing critically and approving or disapproving requests submitted by departments, programs, divisions or units for the addition, deletion, or revision of courses for General Education. Courses previously approved that are found upon review by the committee no longer to meet the general education criteria and learning outcomes shall be removed from the list of general education courses. Where actions affect the requirements of more than one department, program, division or unit, there will be prior consultation with all involved.

Publishing minutes of each meeting in a timely manner. Actions become official if not challenged within a month of publication of the minutes. A challenge may be made by a faculty member or department, provided it is done in writing and that it is in the hands of the Chairperson of the Committee before the expiration date of the period provided above. Considerations of challenges must be taken up by the Committee within 30 working days. If an agreement cannot be reached between the Committee and the Petitioner, the matter is forwarded to the Provost for resolution.

B. Structure

The committee will consist of the following voting members:

- 2 undergraduate student members (from two different units) appointed annually by the Student Government Association
- 7 faculty members designated in the College of Arts and Sciences
(one representative to be elected by the entire faculty from each division of Humanities, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences; one representative to be appointed from each of the general education areas of Written Communication, Oral Communication and Mathematics; and one representative from the college's Curriculum Committee to be elected by that committee)
- 2 faculty members elected in the Speed Scientific School
- 2 faculty members elected in the College of Business and Public Administration
- 1 faculty member elected in the School of Dentistry
- 1 faculty member elected in the College of Education and Human Development
- 1 faculty member elected in from the School of Music
- 1 faculty member elected in the School of Nursing
- 1 faculty member elected in University Libraries

All full-time faculty members will be eligible for election without regard to any administrative post they may hold. All part-time faculty members will be eligible for election, but may only serve in academic years when they are employed by the University. Faculty members will serve three-year terms.

Ex-officio, non-voting members of the General Education Curriculum Committee may be added to the committee by the committee chair. They may include a representative from other constituencies that are substantially affected by the General Education Program.

The committee will elect a chair each year for a one-year term.

The committee will report to the Undergraduate Council, which will then recommend to the Provost.

The Faculty Senate will review the function and structure of this committee every five years, beginning in 2008-09.

1/27/11 revisions