

General Education Program Assessment

Abstracts from: A Proposal for the Renewal of General Education at Oakland University,
March 2004

See especially below:

VI. Assessment and Program Review.....	17-19
A. Assessment Process	
B. Program Review	

Glossary (page 59)

Assessment: The act of evaluating student performance relative to specific
 learning outcomes

E. Need for Review of General Education (page 8)

... the report of the 1999 NCA comprehensive review of the university included serious concerns about
OU's general education program and its assessment

The questions NCA reviewers will focus on in [February] 2005 include:

5. Are assessment findings informing University planning and budget processes and leading to
improvement in student performance?

Explorations Knowledge Areas (page 10)

Knowledge areas have outcomes that will be utilized for assessment purposes.

IV. Learning Outcomes

... the learning outcomes facilitate student assessment. Since the learning outcomes describe what a
student should have learned within an area, an instructor can assess if a student has mastered the learning
outcomes for General Education in the area of the course. This provides the university community, and
outside accrediting bodies evidence that our General Education Program is meeting the goals it was
designed to achieve. (page 15)

VI. Assessment and Program Review (pages 17 – 19)

A. Assessment Process

*The following assessment process was developed in collaboration with the General Education Committee
and reviewed by the University Committee on Assessment.*

At Oakland University excellence in general education has been a tradition. Ongoing assessment is a
valuable process for determining whether general education is meeting its program goals. From the results
of assessment, important information is gained about how students are benefiting from general education
and how program effectiveness can continue to be improved. The General Education Committee (GEC) is
responsible for assessment of the General Education Program at OU. Department chairs are responsible for
providing the information regarding general education courses in their departments that is needed by the
GEC to assess general education.

The current triennial review cycle for general education will continue. There are ten Knowledge Areas plus
Diversity and a Capstone in the revised general education. Each year courses in four of these areas will
undergo review. In addition to the current review of syllabi the new triennial review will also include
assessment of student performance on the general education learning outcomes and indirect assessment
(graduating senior survey) of the cross-cutting capacities. The following assessment process was
developed in collaboration with the GEC. Embedded assessment is used in this process because it is one of
the most faculty-friendly types of assessment. This process is designed to allow departments to oversee
and handle the assessment process for their own general education courses to the greatest extent possible.

However some departments may not have the capacity to handle general education assessment. In such circumstances a department can make a request for assistance to the GEC.

Assessment of Knowledge Areas, Diversity, and the Capstone

1. **The academic unit will identify for each course** a subset of questions from its student evaluation instruments (essay exams, multiple choice tests, quizzes, etc.) and/or other instruments (papers, projects etc.) that address the two learning outcomes for the general education area in which the course resides. **It is critical that assessment data be collected and submitted on a regular basis by a designated individual within each academic unit. Assessment plans for general education courses will be submitted to the General Education Committee (GEC). The GEC may remove a course from the list approved for General Education if an assessment plan and data are not submitted. The overall assessment plan for general education will be developed by GEC and submitted to the Assessment Committee for approval.**
2. During the year prior to the triennial review, courses from a general education area that will be up for review will be asked to collect the results from the instruments described in step 1 above and to provide scoring rubrics/keys for each instrument. For courses that have multiple sections, a random sample of sections will be selected to collect information for that course (i.e., not all sections will be asked to provide information but a representative sample of sections will do so for the course). *Note that courses are asked to provide assessment information, at most, only once every three years.*
3. Faculty in the sections selected will provide:
 - a. Entire sets of completed and scored multiple choice or short answer student course tests or quizzes (with names removed)
 - b. A random sample (25%) of student papers or projects from a section that have been scored by two reviewers (the instructor and one other) and the scoring rubric. Note assessment requires multiple raters for statistical reliability.
 - c. Identification of the items/areas on these instruments that address the general education learning outcomes for that course or indication that the entire instrument addresses the learning outcomes
4. The above information will be provided to the general education data and statistics coordinator. (This will be a dedicated, full-time staff position designed to coordinate assessment information and provide it to the General Education Committee).
 - a. The coordinator or the department if it elects to do so will take a random sample of multiple choice or short answer tests and quizzes from the selected course section and run the statistics on questions related to the general education outcomes (i.e., tally scores on just the items relevant to general education).
 - b. If the department because of hardship is unable to complete the second scoring of an essay test, paper or project, the GEC will arrange such scoring of the random sample from the course section and provide this information to the data and statistics coordinator.
5. Once the general education items from the tests and papers for a course section are scored, the data and statistics coordinator will determine the resulting success rate for that course section. Data for all of the selected sections in a course will be grouped and an overall success rate for a course determined. This information will be provided to the General Education Committee for use in its triennial review of the course the following year and to the relevant department chair.
 - a. *Establishing a Baseline:* The first round of triennial reviews will be used to establish a baseline success rate for each of the general education areas. That is, how well are students currently doing relative to the learning outcomes in the area.
 - b. *Target Success Rates:* Once a baseline is established for an area, the chairs whose departments teach courses in the area will meet with the General Education Committee to establish a target success rate (for example, 70% of students will get 75% of the evaluation items related to the two learning outcomes for the area correct). These target success rates do not have to be the same for all general education areas. The purpose of the target and the feedback from assessment is to identify areas that can be

improved to enhance the learning of students in a course and ultimately in a general education area.

Assessment of Cross-Cutting Capacities

The GEC will also assess courses to determine how and how well the goals for the Cross-Cutting Capacities approved for the General Education program are met. All General Education courses shall include at least one of the four Cross-Cutting Capacities incorporating it into the course design. Courses within some areas are assigned specific Cross-Cutting Capacities that naturally fit into the courses.

- Writing (Rhetoric) will include the Information Literacy Capacity
- Intensive Writing Course in the major will include the Effective Communication Capacity
- Formal Reasoning will include the Critical Thinking Capacity
- **Global** Perspective will include the Social Awareness Capacity

Two types of surveys will be used to assess cross-cutting capacities:

1. A triennial survey of a stratified random sample of graduating seniors that assures input from all major academic units will be conducted to gather student perception about achievement of the cross-cutting capacities and the General Education Program.
2. A triennial survey will be conducted of faculty teaching in the four areas assigned cross-cutting capacities (rhetoric, formal reasoning, global awareness, and intensive writing courses) to determine instructors' perceptions of student achievement in the four capacities.

A software program developed by faculty in the School of Engineering and Computer Science and used to collate and interpret SECS data for their external accrediting agency was demonstrated for the General Education Committee. The GEC believes that the software has the potential to greatly assist in the collection and handling of general education assessment information. Funding for the software is included in the proposed budget of this proposal. Drafts of questionnaires for the General Education Committee's triennial review can be found in Appendix H.

B. Program Review

To insure continuous quality of the general education curriculum a complete program review of general education will be conducted in 2009 (four years after inception) and every seven years thereafter (after two triennial cycles.) Program review looks at course assessments but it goes beyond assessment to identify other areas of a program that can be improved such as facilities, staffing, ratios of full to part-time faculty, class size, relationship to other programs, etc. Program review for general education will follow the guidelines and process of review used for other academic programs. In place of the academic department, the General Education Committee will be responsible for gathering information and conducting the study of general education.

Timeline for Implementing New General Education (page 46)

Sept 2004 – March 2005 Assessment process for general education planned and piloted

Jan 2005 – March 2005 Embedded assessment workshops for faculty

February 2005 Focus visit by NCA on assessment and general education