

General Education Assessment/Action Plan:
Report of the General Education Committee on Assessment and Policy
and the Director of General Education

November 28, 2016

This report describes an adjustment in the current method of recruiting faculty members to “each assessment team [that] will include representatives from across the modes” (see General Education Assessment Plan approved by the University Senate on May 5, 2014). Currently assessment is undertaken by faculty volunteers. Going forward the General Education Committee for Assessment and Policy (GECAP) and the Director of General Education propose to constitute four assessment teams, each focusing on one Mode (“modal teams”). To the extent possible, each modal team will be composed of faculty from the departments that teach courses in the relevant Mode, and departmental representation on each modal team will be in proportion to the number of courses a department teaches in the Mode. The size of a department will be factored in so that faculty in small departments are not unduly burdened. Departments will be asked to identify faculty who will represent them as assessment team members (jurors). Additional volunteers will be welcome on each team. Annual assessment activities will take place each spring, and will include Signature Assignments from the previous spring and fall.

This model will be piloted in spring 2017 to assess Signature Assignments in a single University-wide student learning goal (TBD) from fall 2016. The current active members of the assessment team will be divided into modal teams, and departments will be asked to contribute additional assessment team members. The model will be fully implemented in spring 2018 when Signature Assignments from spring and fall 2017 will be assessed.

Current assessment procedures include collecting and disseminating aggregate data that preserve faculty anonymity with regard to assessment results. These results cannot be used to assess the teaching effectiveness of individual faculty. The proposed procedures preserve faculty anonymity by implementing the current procedures for each of the four modal teams.

RATIONALE

Integrating assessment into the General Education Program supports jurors more fully and efficiently as they supply “the University with data [that] informs recommendations for potential curricular revisions and instructional improvement to enhance student learning” (Gen Ed Assessment Plan, 2014). Currently only about 25% of the impressively dedicated faculty serving as jurors are teaching a General Education course. Departments have no relationship to the assessment process. GECAP and the Director anticipate that establishing a closer relationship among jurors who teach in related disciplines (Modes) and between departments and the assessment effort will accomplish the following:

- Help ensure an effective and sustainable assessment process.
- Bring increased faculty expertise to the evaluation of Signature Assignments within the Modes.
- Increase faculty participation in assessment generally and on modal teams specifically
- Increase interrater reliability by having jurors assess Signature Assignments in disciplines with which they are familiar or expert.

- Encourage conversations among faculty in a given department, and among related departments, about teaching, assessing, and designing Signature Assessments aligned with the appropriate learning goals and associated rubrics.
- Increase faculty understanding of, and confidence in, assessment results.
- Produce meaningful data on student learning outcomes that lead to appropriately focused faculty development initiatives.
- Establish a dependable rhythm that dedicates each spring to assessment team activities and each fall to targeted closing-the-loop activities, including faculty development initiatives focused on specific university-wide learning goals, planned in response to outcomes assessment results.

IMPLEMENTATION

The following is a tentative calendar for annual assessment and closing-the-loop activities:

1. By approximately September 1: Announce two university-wide student learning goals to be assessed the following calendar year (one per semester); issue call to departments to identify faculty jurors who will serve on spring assessment team. Include approximate number of jurors needed for each modal team from each department.
2. By approximately November 1: Names of faculty jurors to serve on spring assessment team sent to Gen Ed director by department chairs.
3. By approximately February 1: Assessment team training:
 - a. Meeting 1 of assessment team: joint meeting of four modal teams to cover responsibilities/expectations; review of rubrics; demo of norming and assessment (Tk20) procedures; break-out meetings of four modal teams.
 - b. Norming materials sent to assessment team.
 - c. Norming scores returned (by survey) and distributed to assessment team.
 - d. Meeting 2 of assessment team: joint meeting of four modal teams for norming debrief; break-out meetings of four modal teams to review norming results; reconvene four modal teams to finalize preparation for assessment of signature assignments.
4. By approximately March 15: Assessment team scores signature assignments collected during spring and fall of previous calendar year. Each modal team assesses the two learning goals covered the previous calendar year in courses offered in the group's respective mode.
5. By approximately April 1: Post-assessment debriefing session (third and final meeting of assessment team to include joint and break-out sessions).
6. By approximately May 1: review assessment results and prepare report to include outcomes in each learning goal by mode of inquiry; develop action plan to include faculty development activities, two learning goals to be assessed the following calendar year, and any recommended modifications to the process.
7. By approximately May 15: circulate report of results; plan closing-the-loop activities.
8. By approximately June 1: circulate fall faculty development events calendar.

The spring 2017 pilot will enable GECAP and the Director of General Education to evaluate the efficacy of this model and recommend any necessary changes.