

## **Social Sciences (N) General Education Assessment**

In the following points we describe our findings based on course portfolios submitted as part of the assessment as part of the General Education Social Science (N) requirement.

### **Findings**

Generally, the material submitted for the courses randomly selected for this assessment evidenced multiple linkages to the two learning outcomes in the social sciences. It was evident that students were given multiple opportunities to achieve the two learning outcomes. It is also apparent that students are given a wide variety of subject matter to choose from. We also noted that that the portfolios were of varying quality as far as the material submitted, and the inclusion of important information on the syllabus.

Of the fourteen courses reviewed, there were two missing syllabi. Eight of the other twelve syllabi did not contain the General Education Learning Outcomes on the syllabus. From our review, we were able to determine that all fourteen courses satisfied the first Social Science General Education learning outcome: knowledge of major concepts, models, and issues (and their interrelationships) of at least one of the social sciences: anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, or sociology.

However for the second learning outcome under the social sciences: provide an understanding of the methods used by social scientists to explore social phenomena including, when appropriate to the discipline, observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis; there was evidence that eight of the courses met this outcome, five did not, and we were unable to determine if the outcome was met. Therefore, we are somewhat concerned that not all of courses are challenging students to link the major concepts to empirical evidence.

In the data provided to us by the Office of Institutional Research, we find that 74 percent of the students taking an N course between 2011 and 2014 met or exceeded the learning outcomes in those courses. There appears to be a slight decline in the proportion of students meeting the/exceeding the goals between AY 2011-12 and AY 2013. The semester in which the student takes a social science apparently does not make a difference in meeting/exceeding the learning outcomes, as the percentages are 75 percent for fall and 74 percent for spring. There, is however, a

fairly significant difference in meeting/exceeding the learning outcomes by course level. Seventy percent of students taking an N course at the 100 level met/exceeded the learning outcomes. That improves to 75 percent at both the 200 and 300 levels, and peaks at 81 percent for 400 level courses.

In conclusion, we are somewhat concerned that not all of the social science courses are challenging students to link theoretical concepts to evidence. This linkage is part of the University's learning outcomes relating to critical thinking, and while we are happy to report that most of courses reviewed are achieving those outcomes, we are concerned that all are not.

## **Recommendations**

We make several recommendations:

1. The automatic Social Science (N) designation for some disciplines should be reviewed. It seems apparent that the automatic approval process is allowing some courses to receive the N designation without meeting both learning outcomes.
2. Request the syllabi for all Social Science (N) courses to check for the second learning outcome.
3. The new General Education Learning Outcomes Assessment Report template being used by the instructors is very useful, as is the reflection statement in reviewing the courses.