

BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY

**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
IN GENERAL EDUCATION REPORT
ACADEMIC YEARS – 2011-2018**

SUBMITTED BY

University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

Assessment Category: Pluralism

Date: Fall 2018

I. Student Learning Outcome(s)

The learning outcomes for all pluralism courses are that students will demonstrate knowledge of:

1. United States society by paying substantive attention to three or more of the groups in the table below:

Required groups/identities (at least 2):	Additional groups/identities:
African Americans	Disability status
Arab Americans	Gender and gender identity
Asian Americans	Immigrant status/issues
European Americans	Language and language identity
Jewish Americans	Religious/spiritual identities
Latin@ Americans	Sexual orientations
Native Americans	Socioeconomic status/class
Pacific Islander Americans	

2. How these groups have affected and been affected by basic institutions of American society, such as commerce, family, legal and political structures, or religion, and by issues involving inequality.

II. Plan/Methods/Measures Used in this Assessment

In order to assess the “P” Gen Ed requirement for Social Sciences, this subcommittee was provided with portfolios for twenty (20) courses. The courses ran from Fall 2011 through Spring 2018: two from Fall 2011; three from Spring 2012; three from Fall 2012; one from Spring 2013; three from Fall 2013; one from Spring 2014; four from Fall 2017; and three from Spring 2018. While the content of the course portfolios varied, all 20 contained syllabi and adequate information to include them in this assessment.

III. Findings

The following criteria were met:

- Course's General Education attributes are identified in the syllabus: 8/20 (40%) addressed attributes very clearly; 5/20 (25%) addressed attributes within another context; and 7/20 (35%) did not address attributes.
- The Learning Outcomes for the P General Education Category is stated explicitly: 5/20 (25%) explicitly noted or minimally modified to fit the course; 6/20 (30%) had language that implicitly encompassed the Learning Outcomes; and 9/20 (45%) did not note Learning Outcomes.
- The course seems to cover material relevant to the Learning Outcomes: 14/20 (70%) clearly covered material relevant to the Learning Outcomes in a substantial part of the course; and 6/20 (30%) covered material relevant to the Learning Outcomes but unclear if it is substantial.
- The students' attainment of the Learning Outcomes are evaluated: 15/20 (75%) clearly identified course components that evaluated the students' attainment of the Learning Objectives; and 5/20 (25%) contained methods that were vague or indirect.
- The portion of the students reported to fulfill or exceed the learning outcomes is: 12/20 (60%) – noted that all or almost all (80-99%) of students fulfilled or exceeded the Learning Objectives; 5/20 (25%) noted that a majority (60-79%) of students fulfilled or exceeded the Learning Objectives; 1/20 (5%) noted that about half (40-59%) of students fulfilled or exceeded the Learning Objectives. 2/20 (10%) of the portfolios had no plausible basis to judge this criterion.

The above findings were not grossly affected by when the courses were offered (2011-2014 versus 2017-2018).

Action plans

Twelve of the 20 assessments utilized the Gen-Ed Assessment Template, a chart that provides columns for Outcome Statements, Assessment Methods/Measures, Assessment Results, and Action Plans. Three of the eight assessments without the chart were prior to Fall 2012; one used the template but did not provide any action plans; one did not use the chart but described an action plan, and one did not use the chart and stated there were no suggestions for change. Some of the action plans related to the mechanics of writing assignments or course but not General Education learning outcomes. Action plans specific to the P General Education included:

- Consider providing more detailed guidance for discussion sections relating to specific gen ed learning outcomes to ensure universal coverage across sections.
- Develop and make a rubric for assignments that make explicit comparisons with other racial minority groups as well as the normative mainstream ("white") group.
- Make explicit that discussions of basic U.S. institutions with regard to race and ethnicity should compare at least three groups.
- The only changes planned for this course is an update to the progress the various groups examined have made to-date.
- Perhaps, providing a rubric will help students fulfill the expectations more precisely.
- Revise or add journal questions to highlight these intersections and relationships, and to stress further these intersections and relationships in class discussion.
- Spending more time analyzing the interactions between European settlers and Native Americans, particularly in the understudied regions of the South and Southwest.

- Spending more time in lecture and discussion sections on the role of immigration in changing legal structures, particularly Supreme Court cases.
- More attention might be given to developing the historical framework to enrich students' understandings of how these institutions have evolved.
- Add more on basic institutions to the questions that students answer in group work and include institutions in a rewritten essay.
- Develop an online time line with significant events and processes to give the students an additional aid to increase their knowledge and perhaps move more from Fulfill to Exceed.
- Develop and post to the web two concept maps that compare U.S.—Mexico and U.S.—Canada for more visual learners.
- Continue to seek out more interesting readings and comparable material from the mass media so as to bring home the outcomes informing the Pluralism requirement.
- Incorporate a service-learning component into the capstone research paper where students would have an opportunity to engage in a community-based project to assist students in the further application of the pluralism general education learning outcomes.

IV. Course Syllabi

As previously noted, a syllabus was provided for each of the twenty courses. The P Gen Ed designation and/or attributes were addressed to at least some extent in 65% of the syllabi. The P General Education learning outcomes appeared at least implicitly in 55% of the syllabi.

V. Discussion of Strengths and Weaknesses of the Assessment

Given that only half of the courses provided sufficient information for the assessment, and that one provided only a syllabus, the assessment process is in need of improvement. Some instructors may be confused as to what must go into a portfolio, or may be unaware of the importance of the Gen Ed assessment.

Future Gen Ed assessments should make an effort to convey to professors a better understanding of the importance of the assessment process as well as its relevance to their interests.

VI. Evidence of Improvements since Last Assessment Cycle

The last available Pluralism General Education assessment was from the ACT Pluralism Committee dated 08/31/2005. That committee reviewed five courses taught in the two years prior to their assessment. The committee concluded that the faculty had done a good job of incorporating the Pluralism requirement in the specific context of their courses and provided a range of teaching and assessment methods. They noted that 75% or more of the students met or exceeded the learning expectations of the course. The only apparent weakness in these courses was the need for a more explicit consideration of the basic institutions of American

society and how the cultural groups considered in the course were affected and have affected these institutions. This was a perceived weakness in all of the courses reviewed. The committee only addressed one syllabus, noting that it was not explicit about what basic institutions of American society are addressed in the course although they had little doubt, given the content of the course, that many were considered. While the assessment criteria were similar in 2005 and the current assessment, faculty for the 2018 assessment were required to submit a more detailed portfolio, It appears that areas in need of improvement in 2005 remain today.

VII. Recommendations:

This subcommittee recommends more explicit instructions on including General Education attributes, learning outcomes, relevant materials, and evaluation methods in the syllabi; a sample syllabus may be helpful.

The University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee is currently piloting a survey-based assessment process rather than collecting portfolios. However, should portfolios continue to be required, recommendations are as follows:

- Clear written instructions on how to create the portfolio and how to use the Gen-Ed Assessment Template. There is a downloadable sample template; however there are no instructions on how to complete it and connect each component across the chart. A brief “How-To” video, loaded on the General Education website, would also be helpful.
- Workshops for faculty, with a recommendation that content is recorded and retrievable to faculty for review.
- Additional consultation time with UUCC or OIR representatives and specific to the assessment process may be helpful. The goal would be to improve portfolios, and the process could be via meeting, email or webinar.