

Motion presented to Faculty Senate 5/17/11
Guidelines for Assessment of General Education

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee recommends acceptance of the following revision of the guidelines for assessment of general education.

Assessment of General Education at Binghamton University
Program and Guidelines
Revised May 10, 2011

The Faculty Senate has endorsed the following revised program for the assessment of general education at Binghamton University:

1. The Faculty Senate creates assessment category teams (ACTs) for the following categories of Binghamton University's GE program: aesthetics, composition, critical thinking and information management, foreign languages, global interdependencies, humanities, laboratory science, mathematics/reasoning, oral communication, physical activity/wellness, pluralism, and social sciences.
 - a. *Procedural Guidelines:*
 - i. Each ACT will have 3 - 5 members. Since each ACT files a report every three years, only the chair of each ACT will be appointed in a non-reporting year. In a reporting year, additional members will be appointed to serve on the ACT.
 - ii. Members of the ACTs are chosen and approved by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee with the help of the Committee on Committees.
 - iii. The annual general solicitation for interest on committees will include a request for interest in serving on ACTs, specifying each of the assessment areas.
 - iv. The term "actively and recently involved" refers to regular faculty who have taught at least one GenEd course in that area in the current and/or last 5 semesters (3-year window).
2. Each team will consist of faculty members and full-time instructors, the majority of whom have been actively and recently involved in teaching GE courses in the category.
3. The UUCC drafted statements of the learning outcomes to be assessed in each category and were approved by the Faculty Senate. These drafted statements are used by the ACTs as a basis for writing its report.
4. A sequence of reporting was created whereby all eleven categories are assessed over a 3-year period; active assessment work occurs every year, involving compilation and analysis of course portfolios for selected courses, leading to written reports at 3-year intervals. This cycle remains unchanged.
5. In order to teach general education courses instructors must agree to provide the information listed in the next section for the assessment process.

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a. Procedural Guidelines:

6. In the case of refusals to cooperate, the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee may consider removal of the GenEd designation in the future for that course taught by that instructor. A sampling of faculty members teaching GE courses is requested and given assistance to create a “course portfolio.” The portfolio is submitted to the appropriate ACT at the end of the semester. It contains:
 - a. A course syllabus;
 - b. A brief description of how the course fulfills the content requirements and meets the learning objectives of the GE category (same document submitted to the Curriculum Committee to earn the GE designation) and the overall goals of critical thinking and information management.
 - c. A brief narrative of strengths and weaknesses in student learning with regard to the learning goals in the selected general education category
 - d. Examples of student work (with names and any other identifying information removed) for assignments that measure student achievement of relevant learning objectives in the category. Examples of work may be graded or not, but should identify levels of achievement including the best work, a representation of “average” or median work, and a representation of the worst work in the class with respect to the relevant learning outcomes. If any work by students fails to meet the outcomes, an example should be included as well. The faculty member will be asked to estimate the proportion of students in the course who fall into each of these categories. The portfolio may contain other material at the discretion of the faculty member or the ACT.

7. The use of course portfolios in the assessment of general education remains the basis for general education assessment at Binghamton University, although additional information is often provided to the ACTs for their review as they prepare to write their reports. As a faculty-based process, it ensures that faculty input and feedback are central to the assessment process. Therefore, the following selection procedures (as developed by the Provost’s Office) will be followed in order to continue ensuring that faculty are included in the assessment process and to ensure that the course portfolios used in general education assessment are representative of courses that students complete in each general education category:

a. Procedural Guidelines:

- i. For the purposes of identifying courses to be assessed, each section of a course having multiple sections taught by different instructors of record will be considered as a separate course. A particular course number taught by a different instructor of record would count as a separate course.
- ii. A maximum of 4 courses is to be assessed each semester in each assessment category, up to a maximum of 10% of the courses being offered.

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- iii. Courses to be assessed in a given category will be chosen randomly from the pool of courses being offered in that category, with the limitations that no more than four courses per department are chosen in a particular semester and an instructor is not chosen more often than once in three years.
- iv. A course fulfilling more than one Gen Ed category (for example, P and C) can be assessed in only one category during a given semester.

It is understood that there is no necessary correlation between grades in a course and the relative ranking of examples provided for assessment, since course grades in many courses depend on more criteria than those involved in the General Education component of the course.

- 8. Working from criteria for learning outcomes approved by the Faculty Senate, each Assessment Category Team will evaluate course portfolios in relation to achievement of the goals for student learning.

Each ACT might also consider additional information it finds pertinent to the successful assessment of each general education category, and will do the following:

- a. Review the findings and recommendations of the last ACT report to understand past issues, to evaluate progress made during the past three years, and to help guide them in making recommendations in its current report;
 - b. Evaluate the course portfolios and other assessment information (e.g., rubric evaluation results, survey data, focus groups, etc.) and assess the extent to which the courses are addressing the student learning outcomes for the general education category to which it has been assigned as well as overall strengths and weaknesses in student learning with regard to such learning outcomes, with particular attention to the overall goal of enhancing critical thinking and information management.
 - c. Make recommendations that address strengths and weaknesses identified in (b).
- 9. Each team evaluates success, considers students' needs and faculty suggestions, weighs changes over time, and explores areas for improvement. Issues involving individual faculty or student experiences are treated as confidential within the process of evaluating course portfolios. Data should be aggregated, and individual students or faculty members should not be identifiable in any reports. Teams may also review aggregate data on grades for all courses in the category, as well as anonymous data from web surveys of faculty and students, or other relevant data from campus-wide surveys and focus groups of students.
- a. *Procedural Guideline:*
 - i. Course portfolios will be maintained in an archive for limited access and data analysis;

All final ACT reports will be anonymous, identifying neither students nor instructors.

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10. Other information may be added such as the aggregate results of assessments that include various modalities, including survey data, rubric evaluations, and focus groups. ..

a. Procedural Guidelines:

- i. Each year, the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment will do the following:
 - a. Administer surveys with questions related to general education learning outcomes (e.g., the Graduating Senior Survey, Undergraduate Alumni Survey, National Survey of Student Engagement, etc.);
 - b. In the areas of critical thinking/information management, composition, and mathematics/reasoning, evaluate samples of students work using a rubric, each on a three-year cycle;
 - i. The results of the rubric assessment will be made available to the composition, mathematics/reasoning, and critical thinking/information management ACTs
 - ii. Given that each rubric assessment requires more extensive analysis, the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment will provide a report under separate cover containing the rubric results to the ACTs, the EPPC, and UUCC.
 - c. Consult with ACTs to determine what other data they might need for completion of assessment reports.
8. Each ACT submits its report to the EPPC, UUC, and Provost every three years in a cycle approved by the EPPC. it may suggest improvements and communicate issues arising in the category as a whole to any appropriate body, including departments, the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UUCC), and the EPPC. Elements of the report result from a systematic review of the course portfolios and other assessments made available to the ACTs.

a. Procedural Guidelines:

- i. At a minimum, each ACT report will contain the following:
 1. A brief summary regarding how the recommendations and issues discussed in the prior ACT report have been addressed
 2. A discussions about strengths and weaknesses about the extent to which courses in each general education category are addressing the learning outcomes in each category.
 3. A discussion of strengths and weaknesses with regard to student learning as they relate to each student learning outcome in the general education category of concern;
 4. Recommendations that ACT might want to make as a result of its review of the course portfolios and other assessment information provided to it.

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5. Additional comments, as the ACT deems warranted.

9. The assessment process is facilitated and overseen by the Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment. Each year, the Assistant Provost does the following:
 - a. Consults with each ACT making a report for the year to ensure that it has the information it needs to complete its report;
 - b. Presents the past year's reports to the EPPC, either in report form or in person;
 - c. Reports on the progress regarding recommendations made by ACTs in past reports to the EPPC;
 - d. Ensures that reporting requirements regarding the completion of general education assessment (in the form of informing SUNY that each assessment has been completed, reports to Middle States, and other regulatory bodies requesting information) is completed annually. In cases of such reports, the Assistant Provost will inform the EPPC Chair that such reports are being made and the substance of such reports;
 - e. Works with the Chairs of the EPPC, UUCC, and other relevant Faculty Senate Committees, as well as the Provost to consider recommendations made by the ACTs.

Explanation:

The Guidelines for Assessment as revised April 23, 2002 were becoming increasingly outdated as a description of current practice. The Committee on Committees recommended to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee that the procedure for populating the Assessment Category Teams (ACTs) should be altered, and the FSEC felt that the whole document should be revised to better reflect current practice.

The substantive change to the document involves the removal of the Assessment Coordinating Committee from the model. The ACC had a considerable role in the formulation of the process of evaluation which has continued to the present, but has not been used for a number of years. Coordination of the assessment process has been handled by the Assistant Provost for Institutional Research and Assessment.

Another change is the proposal to fully populate the Assessment Category Teams only in the year they make their report. Each ACT prepares an assessment report every three years. In the years when an ACT is not scheduled to prepare a report, only a Chair will be appointed to the team.

In addition, there are numerous small updates in procedures to reflect the evolution of the assessment process over time.