Introduction: The assessment subcommittee was asked to review 10 course portfolios collected in the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters.

I. Student Learning Outcome(s)

The General Education (Gen Ed) Learning Outcome for Global Interdependencies (G) courses states:

Students in G courses will demonstrate knowledge of how two or more distinctive world regions have influenced and interacted with one another and how such interactions have been informed by their respective cultures or civilizations.

II. Plan/Methods/Measures Used in this Assessment

The portfolios submitted for this assessment normally include a course syllabus, a written explanation of how the course fulfills the Learning Outcomes, a reflective statement discussing students’ achievement of the Learning Outcomes, a tabular Outcomes Assessment Report, and samples of relevant assignments given to students.

This report draws upon data collected in the portfolios. Many of the quantitative measures provided in the portfolios have a great variability in the way they were presented. For instance, in the outcomes assessment reports, instructors often “invent” new learning outcomes. Some courses submitted outcomes assessment reports for the Gen Ed C (composition) requirement and not the Gen Ed G requirement. This made quantitative analysis of the degrees of student attainment of the Gen Ed G learning outcomes across courses difficult or near impossible. This committee chose to divide the courses into five groups according to the approximate percentage of students that at least met the learning outcomes: 80%-100%, 60%-79%, 40%-59%, 20%-39%, and 0%-19%.

Although there was even greater variability in the topics covered in the descriptions of course content, reflective statements, and action plans for improving student performance included in the portfolios, this report examines the possibility of trends and overlap in these qualitative portions of the portfolios.

III. Findings

All course portfolios included a learning outcomes assessment report. However, due to the variance in the ways the portfolios were constructed, quantitative analysis was difficult. From the outcomes assessment reports, it was only possible to produce a rough estimate of the percentage of students in the courses that met or exceeded the learning outcomes. Furthermore, two courses sampled for the Gen Ed G requirement also fulfilled the Gen Ed C (composition) requirement and submitted the report for the Gen Ed C requirement and not the Gen Ed G requirement. Much of the data from these courses was inapplicable as a result.

Out of the total ten courses sampled during this assessment cycle, two courses (20%) reported that at least 80% of the students in the course met the Gen Ed G learning outcomes. Four courses (40%) reported that at least 60% but less than 80% of the students in the course met the learning outcomes. Finally, the last two (20%) of the courses reported that between 40% and 60% of the students met the learning outcomes.
There was no trend in the action plans that instructors submitted in the portfolios. There was, instead, a variety of plans for adjusting and improving attainment of the Gen Ed learning outcomes in the course, including: giving written feedback, adjusting the scheduling of assignments, incorporating reading materials that more directly address some subject areas, and increasing discussion time. It is important to note that several portfolios either included no action plans or articulated action plans related to the wrong Gen Ed category.

Almost all courses appeared to meet the Gen Ed learning outcomes. Only two courses had a questionable relationship with the Gen Ed G learning outcomes, one which was approved for the Gen Ed G requirement more than several academic years ago.

IV. Course Syllabi

Course syllabi only discussed the Gen Ed G requirement about half of the time. Of the ten courses sampled, five (50%) directly mentioned the Gen Ed G clearly in the syllabus. Only one of these courses mentioned the Gen Ed G requirement but did not present the Gen Ed G learning outcomes on the syllabus. One course portfolio did not contain a syllabus at all. The remaining four portfolios (40%) did not mention the Gen Ed in the syllabus at all.

V. Discussion of Strengths and Weaknesses of the Assessment

In retrospect, it is clear that instructors often did not have an adequate understanding of the Gen Ed assessment process as a whole. This is reflected in the fact that several courses failed to produce data for the correct Gen Ed. Furthermore, several courses that did produce data for the correct Gen Ed did not include action plans, assuming that having a sufficient amount of students meeting the learning outcomes means that the course has no room for improvement. In fact, one of these courses stated that 18% of the students in the course only approached the Gen Ed G learning outcomes, then proceeded to justify not including any action plans by saying “all students at least met the learning outcomes.” It was unclear by this statement if the instructor was referring to other learning outcomes then the G standards, or if they had a misunderstanding of what the bar was for achievement. Finally, instructors often created their own “custom” versions of the Gen Ed learning outcomes or provided numerous different estimations of student fulfillment of the learning outcomes. This is problematic for analytical purposes. Having such a broad dispersal of response styles severely limits this committee’s ability to draw sound conclusions from the data.

VI. Evidence of Improvements since Last Assessment Cycle

Due to the obstacles presented by the way instructors compiled the portfolios, it was difficult to form a basis for comparison with the last assessment cycle. However, out of the courses that completed the learning outcomes assessment report, the number that reported that at least 60% of the students met or exceeded the learning outcomes was within expectations set by the last cycle.

The course inclusion of the Gen Ed G learning outcomes found in this assessment cycle (50%) is the same as was found in the last assessment cycle. There was no improvement or decline.

VII. Recommendations:

Based upon the findings of this report, this committee recommends the following action steps:
1. Remind instructors in Gen Ed G courses to include the learning outcomes *as stated* on the General Education website in their syllabi.
2. Provide the language of the Gen Ed G learning outcomes to instructors in the reminder to include them in the syllabi.
3. Provide examples of strong assessments of the Gen Ed G to instructors as they are in the course planning stages.
4. Consider revising the language of the G requirement and learning outcomes:
   a. Ultimately, there should be measurable outcomes
   b. Consider updating the G requirement to allow for global problems and issues that may not be clearly rooted in "world regions" as currently defined in the requirement, but still affect multiple areas and have a global impact.

Chief Academic Officer: __________________________ Date: 1-8-19