

General Education and Bachelor Degree Requirement Assessment: 2008-09

I. Background

The purpose of the Assessment Unit of the Office of Undergraduate Studies is twofold:

1. Facilitate the review of the General Education and Baccalaureate curriculum requirements by area committees. This is accomplished by insuring that each course is reviewed initially and every 3-5 years by the appropriate committee.
2. Consult with areas within Undergraduate Studies and other undergraduate departments to design, build, and conduct assessments.

This document will focus on the assessment of General Education and Bachelor Degree Requirement curriculum, as the assessment consulting work with the other UGS areas is largely represented in their assessments and annual reports.

II. Description/Overview of Unit

The Assessment Unit of Undergraduate Studies regularly oversees the **review of General Education and Bachelor Degree Requirement courses**. There are eight committees that regularly meet to review new courses as well as to renew the certification of courses with the various requirement designations every year.

General Education and Baccalaureate Requirements Review: There are a total of 12 requirements. Eight of these requirements have committees that meet once per semester to review courses applying for or currently carrying the designation to assure that their design reflects the goals of the University for General Education and the Baccalaureate degree. The four areas committees that do not meet regularly are American Institutions, Lower Division Writing, Quantitative Reasoning, and the BA Foreign Language Requirement, as new courses are not regularly proposed in these areas.

General Education

- ❖ American Institutions (AI)
- ❖ Lower Division Writing (WR)
- ❖ Quantitative Reasoning (QR)
- ❖ Fine Arts Intellectual Explorations (IE) (FF)
- ❖ Humanities IE (HF)
- ❖ Physical, Life, and Applied Sciences IE (SF and AS)
- ❖ Social and Behavioral Sciences IE (BF)

Baccalaureate

- ❖ Upper Division Communication/Writing (CW)
- ❖ Diversity (DV)
- ❖ International (IR)

- ❖ BS Quantitative Intensive (QI)
- ❖ BA Foreign Language Requirement (BA-FL)

During the 2008-09 academic year, the eight requirement committees (BF, FF, HF, SF/AS, CW, DV, IR, and QI) each held two meetings – one in the fall and one in the spring (with the exception of the Quantitative Intensive Committee, which meets online). The following is a summary of the course reviews performed and what actions were taken.

The area committees and Undergraduate Council:

-Reviewed 243 distinct courses

-Took 303 actions, including:

- 146 courses were given five-year renewal or new approvals by area committees
- 32 courses were approved for new designations by the Undergraduate Council
- 66 courses had significant changes requested as a condition of approval
- 48 courses had their designations removed
- 11 courses were rejected by the area committees.

III. Analysis and Appraisal/IV Recommendations and Actions

During the previous year (2007-08), two critiques of the General Education program resulted in action by the Assessment Unit. These included a desire to begin looking in greater depth at student learning outcomes in General Education, and improving the data at our disposal related to what courses students were taking from our General Education program lists to meet their requirements.

Student Learning Outcomes - The incentive to start looking at student learning outcomes was, in part, motivated by the University's participation in the national Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), a portion of which requires institutions to select one of three learning outcomes instruments and begin reporting data on it by the fourth year of participation in the VSA. A subcommittee of the U's Undergraduate Council looked at these instruments during 2007-08 and selected one that they thought most closely met the needs of the institutions. Before we were able to implement that assessment, higher administration officials asked us to reconsider whether we wanted to pick any of these instruments for validity reasons.

Around the same time, in the fall of 2009, our state Board of Regents' Task Force on Higher Education held a conference at which representatives from all of the higher education institutions in Utah agreed to adopt a set of learning outcomes for the statewide General Education program. These 15 learning outcomes were developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) through a national effort.

These learning outcomes were then taken to the University of Utah's Undergraduate Council and proposed as learning outcomes for our General Education program. This proposal was accepted.

In the spring of 2009 we piloted a new process for reviewing General Education courses that requires instructors to:

- Select 3 of the 15 outcomes that they believe students in their class will achieve
- Pick a "signature assignment" that will allow students to demonstrate their achievement of those outcomes
- Report (at a later date) on the achievement of those outcomes with a description of the rubric used and the distribution of scores on different levels of the rubric
- Provide three examples of exemplary student work on the assignment

These elements above will be turned into a "course portfolio" that will be made available online. The hope is that these portfolios will improve the amount of information that is available for assessing the value of a General Education course and provide data for how students are achieving the various learning outcomes for our program.

Beginning in the fall of 2009 all departments applying for new or the renewal of General Education designations for the Intellectual Explorations requirements will be required to select 3 of the 15 outcomes for their courses with the expectation that a certain percentage of them will be required to report on the achievement of those outcomes, as described above, within the next year or two.

Course-Taking Data – The second critique of the General Education program that was addressed this year was that the University did not know, overall, what courses students were actually taking to meet their General Education requirements. On an individual level this information was available from a report from the degree audit system, but there was no way of knowing, as a whole, what courses were being used to meet requirements.

This was addressed by our Administrative Computing Systems team, which wrote a program to scan a batch file with as many reports in it as was required. This was very useful as it revealed the actual nature of students' General Education experience. That data is included as Appendix A below.

Appendix A – Student Course-Taking Trends in General Education

For each of the requirements (with the exception of the BA Foreign Language Requirement), a table is produced below showing the five most common sources of credit for that requirement (U of U courses, an AP Test, Transfer of Credit from another institution, etc.) and the percentage of students in the class of 2008-09 using that method.

NOTE: Just less than half of the students in each of our graduating classes transfer to us from other institutions, and a large percentage of them meet their requirements by virtue of having an associate's degree from a community college. Those individuals are not represented below, only those who used individual courses from other institutions ("Transfer Course") and the University of Utah to meet the requirement.

General Education

American Institutions

HIST 1700	American Civilization	32.2%
	Transfer Course	23.2%
POL S 1100	Us National Govt	19.6%
	AP Test	12.0%
ECON 1740	Us Economic History	9.9%

Applied Sciences

NUTR 1020	Sci Fndtn Nutr & Health	57.8%
HONOR 2201	Calc-Non Sci Part I	11.0%
PHYS 3110	Physics Of Human Body	10.1%
BIOL 2420	Human Physiology	9.2%
GEOG 3230	Pyrogeography	1.8%

Fine Arts

MUSC 1236	Survey Of Jazz	40.6%
	Transfer Course	9.9%
ART 1010	Intro To Visual Arts	4.9%
MUSC 1010	Introduction To Music	3.4%
MUSC 2100	Hist Of Rock'N Roll	2.7%

Humanities

UGS 1100	Fr Sem: American Persp	19.5%
	Transfer Course	8.7%
COMM 1270	Analysis Of Argument	8.4%
FCS 3290	Ethnic Min Families	5.3%
ETHNC 2570	Amer Indian Experience	5.2%

Physical and Life Sciences

	Transfer Course	22.2%
BIOL 1000	Gen Biology	6.0%

BIOL 1210	Principles Of Biology	6.0%
FD NU 1020	Sci Fndtn Nutr & Health	6.0%
MATH 3010	Topics-Hist Of Math	3.3%

QA (Math)

MATH 1210	Calculus I	37.2%
MATH 1100	Quant Analysis	13.8%
MATH 4010	Math Elem Sch Tchrs I	7.0%
MATH 1050	Coll Alg	6.8%
	Transfer Course	5.1%

QB (Statistics)

MATH 1210	Calculus I	15.5%
PSY 3000	Statistical Methods Psy	13.8%
FCS 3210	Fcs Statistics	7.1%
	Transfer Course	6.3%
POLS 3001	Political Analysis	6.2%

Quantitative Reasoning (QA + QB)

MATH 1210	Calculus I	34.4%
MATH 4010	Math Elem Sch Tchrs I	12.9%
MATH 1100	Quant Analysis	12.7%
MATH 4020	Tchnng Elem Schl Math Ii	7.6%
	Transfer Course	7.2%

Social and Behavioral Sciences

FCS 3450	Family Economic Issues	18.4%
	Transfer Course	8.2%
ESS 3670	Exerc Hlth/Cultr Persp	4.7%
ETHNC 2580	Asian Pacific Am Exp	4.6%
BUS 1050	Foundations Of Business	4.6%

Writing

(Lower Div)

WRTG 2010	Intermediate Writing	75.9%
HONOR 2211	Writing In Honors	10.9%
	Transfer Course	10.2%
ESL 1060	Adv Writing For Nns	2.9%

Bachelor Degree Requirements

Upper Division Communication-Writing

PSY 3010	Research Methods Psych	9.5%
WRTG 3015	Professional Writing	8.5%
WRTG 3016	Business Writing	7.1%
H EDU 5300	Diversity & Health	5.8%
WRTG 3400	Professional Writing	5.2%

Diversity

MUSC 1236	Survey Of Jazz	11.9%
UGS 1100	Fr Sem: American Persp	7.2%
	Transfer Course	6.4%
H EDU 5300	Diversity & Health	5.7%
PRT 3310	Leis Beh Humn Divrsty	4.5%

International

FINAN 4550	Intntl Finance	14.7%
NURS 3005	Global/Community Epi	13.1%
ECON 3500	Intntl Economics	10.5%
SOC 3650	Population & Society	8.3%
MKTG 4840	Interntl Marketing	4.5%

Extra/Thoughts

1) SLCC requires two science GE's (life and physical), but only one fine arts, one humanities, and there are some interdisciplinary courses. Because of this, perhaps SLCC students are more apt to be completing two science GE's before they transfer.

2) All Itineras students (joint program with Jordan District, I believe, where students are completing college classes prior to entering the U) are required to complete two Science GE's before entering the University, and that is about 80-100 students a year.

3) Advisers at other schools will tell most students even vaguely interested in the sciences to take two science courses –Bio and Chem in their first semester.

4) The University of Utah's Intro Bio does not have a lab, and many med schools require that or really want to see that for students who are applying. This message might be getting to students who will hold back and take Bio at a CC before coming here so they have lab.

This year, the Assessment Unit also became involved in the establishment of **student learning outcomes** in the Intellectual Explorations General Education requirement areas and a pilot study of those learning outcomes.

Quantitative Intensive (QI)

PSY 3000	Statistical Methods Psy	8.5%
PSY 3010	Research Methods Psych	6.9%
FCS 3450	Family Economic Issues	6.3%
FINAN 3040	Finan Management	5.1%
FINAN 3050	Intro To Invest	5.1%