

General Education Assessment Report—CY 2016 with Appendices

Table of Contents

Summary Report	3
Appendix 1—Exemplary Reports	6
Appendix 2—Insights	13
Appendix 3—Rubric	23

General Education Assessment Summary Report—CY 2016

Three years on and the full cycle of categories run through four by four by four, it seems appropriate to take stock of the distance traveled before turning to the particulars of the General Education assessment for CY 2016.

The shock of the new gave way quickly to growing pains clearly present when we shifted from academic year to calendar year assessment with CY 2014. As a group, there was a certain haphazardness to the submissions that first year, as some departments and programs provided reports on incorrect forms or on no forms at all. Deadlines were missed by some, including the General Education Council and the Assessment Advisory Committee. For council and committee, moreover, there was a growing awareness, born of experience, that the rubric developed to review reports needed revision and that the report form itself was missing a critical piece. Too much too fast also meant that CY 2015 assessment plan updates submitted by departments and programs were unreviewed, left to gather virtual dust in a corner of Blackboard—angels having taken flight.

By CY 2015 our pains had for the most part eased, as nearly all reports were submitted on time, were on the newly revised form, and were complete. Council and committee met deadlines as well, providing to department chairs and program directors the Summary Report for General Education assessment in CY 2015 and individual feedback memos prior to the May General Education Assessment retreat. In addition, the issue of review and feedback provided on the Assessment Plan updates was sorted and CY 2015 ended with memos on the CY 2016 assessment plan updates sent to chairs and directors before the beginning of the spring 2016 semester.

And thus, to the present: if I may, we have matured quite nicely. Yes, there be issues, problems, and concerns still, noted below, but that should not cause us to fail to recognize what we have accomplished and, crucially, what that means for teaching and for student learning.

In a word then, or rather two: thank you.

CY 2016—the particulars

Data section As was true in past assessments, CY 2016 revealed this to be a strength in the reports overall. There were the odd errors in arithmetic and in slips of fingers over keys, of course, but they were few and far between. Even less often did we see that the sample size was insufficient given the number of students enrolled in the course where student learning was being assessed.

Assessment Tool and Measure section This proved to be a welcome addition to the assessment report form. In order for it to be of most value, however, the council and committee think it wise for you to offer a succinct statement of the tool and measure used. If you used tool and measure noted in the assessment plan update submitted prior to the calendar year when the assessment took place, feel free to cut and paste from assessment plan update to assessment report.

Analysis section As was the case in the CY 2015 assessment, the strongest reports in CY 2016 were those that made sure to focus on both strengths and weaknesses in the student work, provided both were present of course. In addition, exemplary reports made explicit the link between the data section and the analysis offered.

It is worth noting that in addition to providing in this section an analysis of the data generated from your review of the student work gathered, you can also provide here analysis of the instrument and measure used should you deem it necessary to do so. Remember, please, that this should not replace your analysis of the student work and whether or not it is successful in speaking to the learning outcome(s).

The weaker efforts on the analysis section had problems in one or more of three areas:

--analysis was missing, with reports only repeating or rephrasing the data section;

--the connection between data and analysis was unclear;

--the analysis focused on only strengths or weaknesses in cases where both were revealed by the assessment.

Action section Here strong reports were characterized by a clear and thoughtful connection between data, analysis, and action to be taken in light of what the assessment of student learning revealed. The steps to be taken are clearly articulated with sufficient detail.

The weaker efforts on the action section gave reviewers pause for one or more of the following reasons:

--the connection between the analysis and the action(s) to be taken is not yet clear—more detail is needed;

--in cases where multiple steps are noted, the connection between the steps themselves is not yet clear;

--steps focused solely on actions beyond or ancillary to the classroom and teaching strategies;

--no action was noted or there was a statement that no action was needed.

A word or two more on the last: no action noted or said to be needed. A number of times we saw this in response to assessments that showed a striking percentage of student work deemed either not meeting or approaching. Does not this warrant attention? If not in your mind, then please indicate why you think this to be the case.

The action section should also be a place for you to articulate steps designed to help student work move from meeting to exceeding. You are doing fine work in the classroom, your students are responding in kind, so don't hesitate to think about what you can do to help them produce even stronger work.

Moving Forward: Bear in Mind

Please be sure to connect each section of the report: tool and measure leading to artifacts gathered and assessed, results analyzed, actions identified.

Please be sure to connect past assessments to present assessment and from there on to assessments yet to come. Let us make this a point of emphasis as we continue to refine our general education assessment practices: doing so will help shape your conversations on teaching and learning and lead, one hopes, to increased student success in meeting and exceeding the general education learning outcomes.

In addition to the particulars already noted, it bears repeating that whenever possible you should make your assessment instrument(s) an integral part of your course and the work you will have students produce in it. That will reduce an instructor's work and also help to ensure that the assessment of learning outcomes is a vital part of the course.

Be sure to link your general education assessment cycle to your program review and assessment of learning outcomes in your major whenever possible. Thus, for instance, use your assessment of the critical thinking abilities of your major as part of your self-study.

Continue to look for efficiencies without cutting corners: a number of departments and programs located their critical thinking assessment in two courses, for instance, with one of the two learning outcomes in the category assessed in each course. Is it possible to locate those efforts in a single course? If so, is it wise to do so? Similarly, can a single assignment be used to generate the student work needed to assess how students have done on both critical thinking learning outcomes, for example, rather than on just one of them?

Don't lose sight of succession: rumbles become tremors become rents in the ground beneath your feet if chairs and directors don't pass on to their successors the assessment system in place in the department or program and if assessment coordinators don't provide their replacements with all that they need so that the assessment, be it of student learning in general education courses or of student work speaking to learning outcomes of the major, has a minimum of bumps and cracks along its course.

Finally, the Council and Committee will look again at the rubric we use when reviewing assessment reports in light of what we learned from applying it to your submissions for CY 2016. Again, many thanks to you and your colleagues for all your work, and for your commitment to teaching and student learning.

Appendix 1—Exemplary Reports

Here we include examples of reports from Anthropology, Music, and Technology Education. The last carries with it a caveat. As you know, we ask that you produce a separate report for each course you are assessing in a given category. With this assessment cycle we now recognize that the exception to our request has to do with situations where you are assessing two or more courses as part of your attempt to get a handle on student learning over time in your major. In such a case, a single report that has two or more courses on it is appropriate; the Technology report offers an example of such a report.

General Education Assessment Report--Social and Behavioral Sciences

Course: ANT 111

of sections: 3

Calendar Year: 2016

Knowledge and Skills Areas / Competencies	Learning Outcome Students will demonstrate	Information			Results ¹			
		Semester(s) of data collection	Students Assessed		# Exceeding Standards	# Meeting Standards	# Approaching Standards	# Not Meeting Standards
			#	% ²				
Social and Behavioral Sciences	understanding of the methods scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis;	Fall 2016	170	98%	46	73	29	22
	knowledge of the major concepts, models, and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.	Fall 2016	170	98%	47	67	33	23

¹ Each student should be counted only once. If assessments have taken place across different courses/course sections, data should be aggregated for the purpose of this report.

² Number should represent percentage of the total students enrolled in courses approved as addressing this learning outcome area.

Assessment tool and measure used. Did you use the type of tool (exam questions, assignments, essays, etc.) and measure (quantitative or qualitative) identified in your assessment plan update? If not, please indicate both what you used instead and the rationale for doing so. If more space is needed, you may attach an extra sheet. **We used exam questions (including one essay) as our primary assessment. Questions were selected based on the examples provided in the assessment plan by Dr. Saraydar and were chosen from our three class sections to most closely match the categories in each of the learning outcomes. For exam questions, the percentage of correct answers out of the total were matched to the percentage categories we used as a quantitative measure to establish standards assessment, e.g. >85 Exceeding, 84-72 Meeting, 65-71 Approaching, and <65 Not Meeting. For future assessments we are revamping our questions to be standardized across all of our sections of ANT 111.**

Analysis of results: please be sure to address each learning outcome and both strengths and weaknesses revealed by the assessment, if any. **Our assessments show that the majority of our students (over half) across all three sections either exceeded or met standards for both outcomes. These results indicated that when it came to the specific data driven questions and major conceptual essays, most students were able to have outcomes that met or exceeded our standards. We also compared results among sections for each category to better understand our results. Among sections, the percentage per section of students achieving meeting or exceeding standards ranged from 76 percent (for the large 85 person section) to 65 percent (40 person smaller section), with the other small section (45 person) at 57 percent. This difference that can be partly explained by looking the category results in more detail. For the Meeting Standards category, both the 85 person and 40 person section percentages were almost identical, which is a good indication that similar expectations were deployed and implemented between these two sections. The biggest differences among the three sections were found in the Not Meeting Standards and the Exceeding Standards categories. Two sections, the big section (n=85) and one small section (n=40) were almost the same, at 10 to 12 percent of their students falling into the Not Meeting standards category, while the third small section (n=45) had 20 percent in the Not Meeting standards category. Since all classes used similar assessment questions, it is interesting that the same small section out of the three sections had a larger Not Meeting percentage and also the lowest percentage of students in the exceeding and meeting standards categories. The only obvious difference in pedagogical technique between the sections, is that the 45 person section was the only section in which Clicker use/daily reading quizzes were not implemented. Given that the questions targeted in daily clicker quizzes were heavily weighted towards basic concepts and methods learned in class, the repetition of these concepts throughout the class were intended to provide practice for students to remember them based on learning concepts discussed by SUNY Oswego's CELT. Based on the results of the two sections that used clickers, this effort may have been worth it. We do want to note that given that we only have three sections (or data distributions) to compare, the third section's differing percentages could also be the arbitrary result of happening to have a different set of students than the other two sections or more class absences or issues that cannot be captured by the assessments.**

General Education Assessment Report--Social and Behavioral Sciences

Action to be taken in addressing these assessment findings:

From the initial results from Fall 2016, the multiple choice questions showed the most variance in correct answers. We will also implement the use of the same exact exam questions across sections so that our results will be more statistically reliable and consistent in their biases across sections.

Finally, based on this year's assessments results, we have some indication that daily reading quizzes implemented via our Clicker system may make a difference in increasing the percentage of students who do not fall below meeting or approaching standards. Based on these tentative results, we will consider implementing the use of clicker or daily quizzes in all of our sections in the future and see if that improves the number of students who are above the Not Meeting standards category. Once we have more than just three sections data points, we will be better able to reflect on what our differences among sections in outcomes could mean.

What has been learned that could be helpful to others as they conduct assessment of General Education:

Based on our assessment results, we suggest that using the exact same sets of questions and methods in assessment across sections provides the most robust way of assessing results. We also found that using a larger sample size of the class, (in our case, we used every student who did not drop out during the semester so approximately 98 percent of all of our students taking ANT 111 in Fall 2016) to calculate our assessment, was also preferable. Given the large variance between some of the sections on standards categories, a smaller sample size would have almost certainly obscured the large percentage differences in some unhelpful ways. We strongly suggest that, where possible, at least a sample of 30 students per class section, should be included in the assessment. That minimum number allows one to do more statistically robust comparisons (using variance and mean with more confidence) based on the central limit theorem from probability. Anything smaller than that, and those measures of difference are far less reliable.

General Education Assessment Report -

Course(s): 1 section - MUS 301 (spring only)

Calendar Year: 2016

Knowledge and Skills Areas / Competencies	<u>Learning Outcome</u> Students will	Information			Results ¹			
		Semester(s) of data collection	Students Assessed		# Exceeding Standards	# Meeting Standards	# Approaching Standards	# Not Meeting Standards
			#	% ²				
Critical Thinking	develop well-reasoned arguments MUS 301-Theory Papers (Analysis and Evaluation of a musical work)	SPRING 2016	15	100%	8 (53%)	6 (40%)		1 (7%)

¹ Each student should be counted only once. If assessment has taken place across multiple sections, data should be aggregated for the purpose of this report.

² Number should represent percentage of the total students enrolled in the course.

Assessment tool and measure used. Did you use the type of tool (exam questions, assignments, essays, etc.) and measure (quantitative or qualitative) identified in your assessment plan update? If not, please indicate both what you used instead and the rationale for doing so. If more space is needed, you may attach an extra sheet.

Yes the exam questions, assignments, etc. outlined in our plan update were utilized as described.

For LO #2 - **THEORY PAPER** - Students write papers in three steps: I: pick repertoire, submit repertoire hard copy with written measure numbers; II: use personal analysis of the piece to lead to a thesis statement; III: supply three (3) bullet points that will form the body of each the following paragraphs: Melodic Treatment; Harmonic Treatment; Form; Rhythmic Treatment; Texture.

Analysis of results: please be sure to address each learning outcome and both strengths and weaknesses revealed by the assessment, if any.

Theory Paper - Since first implementing some of the changes from the last assessment, we continued to notice the following improvement: Limiting the scope of the project--(Mozart Piano Sonata First movement) has greatly focused the observations of the students, partially because the scope of this project ensures that we have dealt with this specific form directly in class. This change has improved the process considerably, leading to stronger overall efforts.

Continued weak spots: Generating thesis statements that are at once concise enough to be arguable, but still broad enough to allow for high-level analysis in the five areas (form, rhythm, melody, harmony, structure)...While many students finally get there, it takes a bit of extra class time and private meetings in some cases to arrive at an acceptable argument. That said—their original thesis statements aren't "bad"—but need tightening.

Using appropriate language for classical forms. (This is an ongoing challenge—but continued attention and revisions do help.)

Writing in a clear, academic tone. (Again--this is a broader issue than for their music papers--but nonetheless-one that is part of the instructor's role.)

General Education Assessment Report -

Action to be taken in addressing these assessment findings:

Theory Paper – Since last assessment, continued use of class time to work on the creative process (brainstorming, citing evidence, asking questions and answering them with specific details, etc.) has occurred. Due to the success of this process, we intend to continue in this manner for the time being.

What has been learned that could be helpful to others as they conduct assessment of General Education:

The more thorough the committee is with preparing the Assessment plan- the better the outcomes!

General Education Assessment Report

Technology Education and Technology Management

Courses: TEL 120 & TEL 323

of sections: 3 (TEL 120) 1 (TEL 355)

Calendar Year: 2016

Knowledge and Skills Areas / Competencies	<u>Learning Outcome</u> Students will	Information			Results ¹			
		Semester(s) of data collection	Students Assessed		# Exceeding Standards	# Meeting Standards	# Approaching Standards	# Not Meeting Standards
			#	% ²				
Critical Thinking TEL 120	identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others' work	Spring 2016, Fall 2016	40	75%	5 (12.5%)	10 (25%)	16 (40%)	9 (22.5%)
	develop well-reasoned arguments				7 (17.5%)	13 (32.5%)	11 (27.5%)	9 (22.5%)
Critical Thinking TEL 355	identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others' work	Spring 2016	16	94%	4 (25%)	6 (37.5%)	6 (37.5%)	0 (0%)
	develop well-reasoned arguments				6 (37.5%)	10 (62.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

¹ Each student should be counted only once. If assessment has taken place across multiple sections, data should be aggregated for the purpose of this report.

² Number should represent percentage of the total students enrolled in the course.

Assessment tool and measure used.

The assessment tools for that were used for both classes were position papers where the students were presented with a problem that they were to then research, evaluate, and develop an argument for one of the two sides presented. For TEL 120 Introduction to Materials Technologies students were asked to evaluate the choice between paper and plastic bags used by stores. For TEL 355 Energy Technologies students were asked to evaluate the use of food sources for the production of ethanol for fuel. Copies of both assignments are attached to this report.

Analysis of results:

TEL 120 is comprised of primarily first and second year students. This is an entry level course for students in Technology Education, Technology Management, and for the Technology Minor. Students in the technology minor and one upper level student were not included, and a few students failed to turn in the assignment resulting in 75% participation. TEL 355 is only open to third and fourth year students. One student did not submit the assignment resulting in 94% participation.

TEL 120 had 37% of the students meeting or exceeding rubric 1 and 50% meeting or exceeding rubric 2. General observations from evaluating the assignments were that students addressed both sides of the issue, but did not support their arguments well or did not back their arguments with sources. Some selected a side of the issue and presented little information on the opposing side. There were many papers that included reference sources but failed to use citations in the paper. Students often relied heavily on popular press articles, news sources, or web resources that were not peer reviewed.

TEL 355 students showed 62.5% as meeting or exceeding rubric 1 and 100% meeting or exceeding rubric 2. General observations were that the students presented logical arguments that presented both sides of the argument and backed their decision with multiple factors including economics, the environment, food availability, efficiency, and impacts on transportation. Some students synthesized a third solution that was better than the two given viewpoints. Students in this group generally used higher level sources and presented statistics and research findings. There were a few students who identified sources but did not adequately cite them in the paper.

General Education Assessment Report Technology Education and Technology Management

Action to be taken in addressing these assessment findings:

Place a greater emphasis on selecting appropriate sources for written assignments and projects in all classes. While many of the courses in the technology programs have a heavy laboratory component, students are still expected to complete planning, develop projects, and some writing assignments that would require locating and evaluating information sources.

Provide more instruction on citing information sources in written content. Multiple students utilized sources without properly citing them in the paper. This could be addressed in all classes that include written assignments and is a component of TED 209 Technical Writing and Literacy which is taken by all of our majors.

What has been learned that could be helpful to others as they conduct assessment of General Education?

Assessing classes at different levels is highly recommended as it shows data about student performance at an entry point of the program and near program completion. This provided data that there was growth through the program as well as information about what should be better addressed.

The assignments that were used for the assessment were standard course assignments and not created as a special assignment for this assessment activity. This did not create additional work for faculty with the exception of scoring for the two rubrics as they graded the assignments.

Appendix 2—Insights

Here you will find comments regarding assessment process and rationale, teaching, and results that we hope will be useful as you continue to refine your assessment practices and develop your classroom strategies for teaching and learning.

Process and Rationale

If done correctly, linking the critical thinking assessment to the major learning outcomes is a good idea. It gets the students thinking hard about what they have learned in the major and can reveal strengths and weaknesses to program/department faculty that can spur discussion and perhaps lead to change in curriculum and delivery.

In the future, Art History will not assess the infusion of Critical Thinking by degree but by courses offered specifically by the Art Historians (ART 471 and ART 353), as we lack the numbers to be sure of capturing a meaningful sample in any given term. Analysis of larger percentages of enrolled students, regardless of whether this category has been previously embedded in their degree program, enables us to analyze larger samples and hypothesize causes and consider options for future study. Moreover, since many Studio and Graphic Design majors enroll in Art History minors (Art History, Museum Studies, and Arts Management all fall within the Art History area), there may be a correlation between outcomes for students in double majors or pursuing art history minors who take Art 353 and Art 471 as electives.

Others can adopt the same protocol for critical thinking assessment. The detailed instructions given to the students for the critical thinking assignments, and the guidelines for grading given to the advisors, were very helpful in writing and grading the papers, which leads to a more reliable assessment.

For this particular part of General Education, perhaps the time is upon us when we need to reconsider just what is and where are located what we call 'arguments'. We're still working on this. But it may be that arguments are imbedded in things or apparatuses.

Understanding these material instantiations of logical forms might be a first step toward having our CSS students recreate them as discursive forms. This would be a "materialist method" of the kind used in technology studies, media archaeology, critical making and critical design. CSS might do well to explore these and then see if the Gen-Ed assessment mechanism could be adapted to them.

A common assignment and implementation is important when assessing multiple sections of the same course. It also helps to ensure consistency across the courses. Second, when requiring students to create their own arguments, they need time to formulate their responses. Finally, objective one asks them to be able to identify, evaluate, and analyze their own or others work. There can be a stark contrast to their ability to analyze their own argument against their ability to evaluate other's arguments.

We are not sure whether critical thinking skills in software design and development have strong parallels in other disciplines. However, we still believe that the combination of free-form project critiques and algorithm evaluation captures a broad enough range of critical thinking skills for our Computer Science and Software Engineering programs.

It's easier to assess students if the assessment is organically part of the syllabus. The script coverage assignment is something that I've done every semester with the CRW 401: Advanced Screenwriting class. The assignment has remained the same each year, but my grading has become tougher.

Echoing something Professor Giglio said in the assessment of CRW 401: "It's easier to assess students if the assessment is organically part of the syllabus." I'd add that the assessment might be improved if the university could utilize a range of critical thinking rubrics that speak more clearly to the various disciplines they're assessing (rather than attempting a "one size fits all" approach).

With the earlier assessment update form, it is wise to take advantage of the opportunity to select an embedded instrument and make sure it maps to a rubric aligned with learning outcomes. Also, the current Blackboard LMS has a rubric feature that is helpful in setting expectations for students, given them transparency in evaluation and compiling the outcomes data.

1. Efficient planning and well-organized data collection & preparation are needed for a successful and collegial process.

This is easier if your program goals can be aligned with the critical thinking outcome. This is the first time I am assessing this GE goal, but because one of my program's goals is to promote critical thinking, I can use the same assessment tools.

Asking students to work on these skills in only one class is not enough. Repetition throughout your program is beneficial.

If there was a problem with our assessment procedures, it should have been flagged when we submitted our plan in Fall 2015 -- actually earlier, since our planning began before that.

Students at all levels have difficulties with more complex critical thinking activities. GE courses should keep this in mind and attempt to cultivate more advanced skills.

One thing we realized is that the change of academic year to calendar year (a change since the last assessment cycle) does affect our assessment somewhat in these categories. Our MUS 496 course (Capstone) runs throughout the academic year. Students take 496 in the fall and then finish their capstones in the spring. These are generally the same students in both classes so there is some continuity with size of class and directions/assignments given.

Now that we are in calendar years- we are assessing two different groups of seniors- those finishing the capstone process (reflection paper) and another group who is beginning the capstone process. The reflection paper is discussed in the fall and assigned for the following spring. It is difficult to correlate the success of the paper and the instructions/rubric given when we are essentially receiving the finished assignment from a different group of students to whom it was given? Does that make sense?

The more thorough the committee is with preparing the Assessment plan- the better the outcomes!

For the School of Business, Critical Thinking is one of the learning goals for the major also. The assessment is carried out using an external instrument. For Gen Ed a special assessment had to be done. It would be helpful if the duplication in effort could be minimized. The requirement to use the SUNY Central rubric makes it difficult to use the assessment results used for our major, however.

We've been using exclusively SOC 490 (Senior Seminar) for critical thinking assessment, and this is our first time we use a 200-level class for that purpose. It is reasonable to believe that the level of expectations should be set separately for 200-level courses (mostly sophomores) and 400-level courses (mostly seniors). That is, we expect that in a 200-level class, a majority of the students demonstrate the level of "Milestone: Meeting Expectations and Approaching Expectations," and in a 400-level class, a majority should demonstrate the level of "Milestone: Exceeding Expectations and Meeting Expectations." We plan to go back to assess SOC 490 to establish whether or not there is a change in students' critical thinking skills from students in the lower course levels compared to those in higher level courses.

Another helpful suggestion is to conduct assessment using SOC 220 (Intro to Research Methods) and compare the outcome to that of SOC 221 (Intro to Social Statistics). The reason for this comparison is that most students generally point to statistics course as one of the most anxiety-inducing courses in their degree requirement. So, it is plausible that some students might be just too overwhelmed by statistics anxiety to think critically.

In sum, we have been assessing SOC 490 (Capstone Senior Seminar) simply because we believe that capstone projects are the most ideal ones in evaluating students' critical thinking skills. For this year's assessment, we assessed SOC 221 (Intro to Social Statistics) instead. The reason why we want to change where the artifacts of student work are to be collected is to assess changes and continuities in students' critical thinking skills. That is, we believe that critical thinking skills are developed over the course of a student's curriculum at SUNY-Oswego. By evaluating entry level (such as SOC 221 or SOC 220 as

stated above) and exit level (such as SOC 490) artifacts of student work, we should be able to learn to what extent student skills in critical thinking are developed at SUNY-Oswego.

--Gathering as much data as is practical is critical to making informed analysis and plans of action.

--Starting to look at courses at each level has helped us to better understand how our infusion plan is working in each of our majors. It is likely that the timing of assessment assignments and their weights (in terms of grades) may impact results.

--We have been using spreadsheets for data to be submitted. In general, this works well provided everyone submits data in the format requested. We regularly sort and calculate our data based on major.

--One problem we have encountered is that the class lists we download from myOswego only list a student's first major. This means that we manually have to look up individual students who do not have one of our majors listed. We tend to use all students in our majors in a section rather than a small sample, which means this can slow our process down a bit.

--Finally, we also find it challenging to use these forms collaboratively. It would be helpful, in the future, to have a version in Google Docs that would be easier for colleagues to collaborate on writing these reports and providing feedback.

Assessing classes at different levels is highly recommended as it shows data about student performance at an entry point of the program and near program completion. This provided data that there was growth through the program as well as information about what should be better addressed.

The assignments that were used for the assessment were standard course assignments and not created as a special assignment for this assessment activity. This did not create additional work for faculty with the exception of scoring for the two rubrics as the graded the assignments.

It might be useful to create a policy regarding temporary faculty and assessment, to simplify the assessment processed if the instructor of the course is no longer involved.

The format of the new report template has prompted us to approach data collection from the standpoint of success rate per student on the concepts related to each learning outcome, rather than success rate per test question. The prior report format did not make it clear which data were sought.

Using a nationally recognized examination and administering it through Blackboard is efficient and provides a large volume of data to interpret.

Based on our assessment results, we suggest that using the exact same sets of questions and methods in assessment across sections provides the most robust way of assessing results. We also found that using a larger sample size of the class, (in our case, we used every student who did not drop out during the semester so approximately 98 percent of all of our students taking ANT 111 in Fall 2016) to calculate our assessment, was also preferable. Given the large variance between some of the sections on standards categories, a smaller sample size would have almost certainly obscured the large percentage differences in some unhelpful ways. We strongly suggest that, where possible, at least a sample of 30 students per class section, should be included in the assessment. That minimum number allows one to do more statistically robust comparisons (using variance and mean with more confidence) based on the central limit theorem from probability. Anything smaller than that, and those measures of difference are far less reliable.

1. The department and the college should keep better communication with adjuncts on how to get involved in the assessment plan/report, especially on keeping student work.
2. New faculty members offering Gen Ed courses should get special advising on course preparation and grading policies so that they can be better prepared in Gen Ed assessment documents.
3. Instructors teaching large sections should share their experiences of assessing student work so as to provide insights into which tool/measure would be more appropriate to assess student learning outcomes.

Perhaps “demonstrate an understanding” needs to be clearly defined in the assessment plan. For exams, that could simply mean they gave the correct answer or when asked to identify a specific element of a study within an exam. However, when undertaking the assessment for these learning objectives, we wanted to also take into account the students’ ability to apply information regarding the social sciences to demonstrate more critical thinking about models of communication and how the media industries communicate messages.

It would be helpful to have a repository of relevant documents (e.g., via Google drive) available to faculty members involved in the assessment process to ensure that these are easily accessible and that correct/most up-to-date forms are being used for assessment purposes. This should also facilitate the process of compiling findings across various courses, departments, and objectives.

It would also be helpful to provide greater flexibility in how results are presented. While it is understandable that a common format presents clear advantages, the format does not lend itself to all types of data equally. For instance, for learning outcome number 2, the data presented in this report are based on multiple-choice questions (i.e., right vs. wrong responses). These types of data do not allow to be delineated according to the categories presented on this form (e.g., exceeding, meeting, approaching standards).

There is a real tradeoff between designing an instrument that maps to each outcome versus using a ready-made instrument that is used nationally and tested for validity and reliability. With this first iteration, it is unclear which gives us more useful data.

Coordinate early and often with the instructors of courses to communicate assessment goals and rationale.

New faculty teaching courses that include assessment components need to be brought up to speed as soon as possible before they begin their respective teaching assignments. Given that our Department is constantly evolving and newly hired full-time faculty would probably be teaching these courses, it seems necessary to thoroughly discuss how instructors embed assessment within said courses.

We feel that our general assessment plan is sound, and its implementation is improving. The department's "czar of GenEd assessment" needs to be in contact with each course coordinator very early in the fall semesters, so that communication with course instructors is done very early in the semester. Also each coordinator is to be given a copy of a previous final exam, on which previous GenEd assessment problems are clearly marked.

Teaching

These assignments required students to spend a considerable amount of outside class time to research and critically investigate materials and data. To support this, significant class time, as well as examples provided by the instructor, was given at the beginning of the semester to assist in the research process. Students were afforded multiple opportunities to check with the instructor and classmates about the progress of their work as well. For example, students presented a short "preview" of their upcoming oral presentation, with a few slides and brief outline, after which, other students offered feedback. Students found it helpful to get feedback on their own work, as well as see the positive and negative aspects of their classmates' work, without any concern that this initial presentation impacted their grade.

By focusing on some of the natural demarcations in fiction: the sentence, the paragraph, and the scene, the instructor can guide students to making larger connections to the work as a whole.

It takes just about the full semester for some students to make these changes in writing and thinking, and requires weekly feedback on student critiques as well as brief in-class refresher sessions, but it is generally the case that most students will be able to write a comprehensive and articulate critique after a few weeks of practice.

Faculty need to plan ahead as they build their syllabi. Faculty need to consciously model strategies.

2. Students need more explicit work in targeting arguments, articulating premises & inferences, and assessing the relations between premises and conclusions as well as assessing the reasonableness of premises and their credibility. Assignment prompts may do too much of this work for them in implicit ways.

It is possible that incorporating the SUNY critical thinking rubric more thoroughly into our upper-level writing prompts may both engage students more deeply in critical thinking and yield an increased number of students who exceed expectations in assessments of critical thinking.

The instructor of the course stated that she found it helpful to consult the SUNY Critical Thinking Rubric when designing the assignment used for this assessment. She incorporated language from the rubric into the assignment directions. She thinks this helped her solidify the element of critical thinking that she attempts to use in many of her assignments as well as clarify to the students what constitutes critical thinking. She will continue to incorporate this language into other assignments and is sharing her perspective with other instructors in the program and college.

Discussion type classes can produce good results.

Sharing student work in a public forum raises the quality of student work.

Self-teaching homework exercises can improve the critical thinking skills associated with Learning Outcome 1 somewhat in the absence of classroom instruction. Learning Outcome 2 will continue to be assessed by means of in-class essay arguments. Currently students get up to ten points for their arguments, and they lose a point for each identified error, such as confusing a conclusion for a premise, or making a premise two sentences long, instead of a single, clear proposition. But constructing a persuasive argument is not a mechanical process, so there will inevitably be a subjective element.

Letting students choose their own topics motivates them to be more creative.

Instructor's full, articulated feedback on the student's writing is essential to the learning process. Critical thinking is not developed overnight; it requires patience, a critical approach to one's ideas, and a constant trial and error while refining one's arguments (see my supporting materials below). Communication between professor and student is key in that regard.

As this assignment is a traditional research paper, it was easier to assess using the critical thinking rubric than some more discipline specific work.

Science is often difficult for non-science majors. They need more cases where reasoning is part of the thought process.

Make sure to be aware of exam questions that students consistently perform poorly on. This allows the making of adjustments to your teaching approach in the areas where students consistently have difficulty.

The challenge for people with PhDs in a subject area is that we have long since accepted lots of the conventions and premises in our fields. People who are exposed to them for the first time (for example, undergraduates) do not necessarily accept these things easily...they are still in a place where they seem arbitrary and don't make sense. This is their inexperience etc. But instead of putting it on them as their problem, and washing our hands of it, we continue to use students' questions and the places where they get hung up to learn how to teach. For us, this is not a drag. It makes it more interesting.

Results

Students who did not meet the objectives demonstrated weak writing skills throughout the semester.

In the case of ECE, more assessment data is needed.

As a small program, we are continuing to collect this data on an annual basis and will summarize our findings and address the results in the next review cycle.

In terms of the point values assigned holistically to their constructed arguments, most of the students' scores improved over the semester, with only one student's argument scores

going down, and he was the same student whose score on the first learning outcome went down. One suspects outside factors may have affected his overall performance.

We are thrilled that the students are excited about having their say about the structure of the language we worked on. But it would serve them well to be enriched by what other linguists say about the experience of eliciting data. This made us think that we could use our program budget to bring in speakers who could talk to the students about how linguists elicit data...and then the "problem" seemed like it would be more fun to solve.

In smaller departments, it can be hard to rely on capstone assessment findings due to the small sample size.

The research and writing skill level of students appears to be very basic.

This assessment suggests that exams alone may not always be a perfect representation of a student's ability to meet learning outcome #1 and #2.

It seems that there is an overall issue with the knowledge of basic research paper guidelines.

Appendix 3—Rubric

Here we include the rubric members of the General Education Council and the Assessment Advisory Committee used as part of the review of your general education assessment reports.

Learning Outcomes with Information and Results

Did they report numerical data?

0 No entries

1 Learning outcomes have most of the (a) numeric values for n and percent of students **and** (b) n of students exceeding, meeting, and approaching.

2 Every outcome has (a) numeric values for n and percent of students **and** (b) n of students exceeding, meeting, and approaching.

3 Every learning outcome has (a) numeric values for n and percent of students **and** (b) n of students exceeding, meeting, approaching, and not meeting. The sample size is appropriate.

Major Findings

Did they provide an analysis of the data?

0 No entry; or no entry that speaks to the learning outcomes.

1 The report identifies only strengths or weaknesses but not both.

2 The report identifies strengths and weaknesses in student learning with respect to learning outcomes. Fails to specify method of analysis.

3 Some indication of method of analysis is described. The report identifies strengths and weaknesses in student learning with respect to learning outcomes.

4 Method of analysis is fully described with sufficient detail. Findings are supported by the data. The report identifies strengths and weaknesses in student learning with respect to learning outcomes.

Action

Did they specify actions to be taken to address shortcomings identified in the analysis?

0 No entry

1 Suggests an action that indicates some awareness of and reflection on shortcomings.

2 Partially identifies appropriate action to address shortcomings, but does not clearly identify specific steps.

3 Clearly identified specific steps to be taken. Action is an appropriate means to address the identified shortcomings. [Or no shortcomings identified and the data and analysis support this.]

Insights

Did I learn anything helpful about assessment?

1 [Bonus] Report provides something useful