

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
Report from the General Education Assessment Subcommittee

General Education Category #5: Humanities

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Subcommittee Members:

David Kaplin (chair), English; Shannon McRae, English; Andrew Cullison, Philosophy

Overview of Process

The subcommittee was charged with recording final course grades from a minimum 20% sample of students enrolled in courses satisfying the General Education Category 5 (Humanities) requirement, as evidence of the proportion of students who exceeded, met, approached, and failed to meet the Humanities General Education requirement in the Fall semester of 2010.

Assessment Task

The Humanities General Education Requirement has the following learning outcome:

* Knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program.

Methodology

In selecting our 20% sample, we attempted to choose courses that represented different departments within the Humanities division while preserving the approximate ratios among students taking courses in each department. Through FredQuest, the Registrar provided us with the final course grades of 283 students, which represent approximately 23.7% of the 1195 students enrolled in Humanities General Education courses in the Fall 2010 semester. The courses we selected are:

CRN 30309 COMM 201-01 Rhetoric and Criticism
CRN 37171 COMM 201-02 Rhetoric and Criticism
CRN 36888 ENGL 205-05 Epic and Romance
CRN 36889 ENGL 205-06 Epic and Romance
CRN 30529 ENGL 209-03 Novels and Tales
CRN 30695 ENGL 209-04 Novels and Tales
CRN 30537 ENGL 211-01 World Poetry
CRN 30540 ENGL 211-02 World Poetry
CRN 31210 MUED 300-01 Foundations in Music Education
CRN 37432 MUED 300-02 Foundations in Music Education
PHIL 30831 PHIL 115-04 Philosophical Inquiry
PHIL 30833 PHIL 115-05 Philosophical Inquiry

Results

Final course grades were distributed among our sample of students in this way:

| Grade | Count | Percent |
|-------------|-------|---------|
| A | 36 | 12.7% |
| A- | 40 | 14.1% |
| B+ | 29 | 10.2% |
| B | 37 | 13.1% |
| B- | 23 | 8.1% |
| C+ | 20 | 7.1% |
| C | 30 | 10.6% |
| C- | 22 | 7.8% |
| D+ | 8 | 2.8% |
| D | 15 | 5.3% |
| D- | 3 | 1.1% |
| F | 15 | 5.3% |
| W | 1 | 0.4% |
| WC | 4 | 1.4% |
| Grand Total | 283 | 100.0% |

Based on these raw data, the subcommittee assigns the following categories of results:

| | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| Students Exceeding Learning Outcome (A, A-, B+, B) | = | 142 (50.1 %) |
| Students Meeting Learning Outcome (B-, C+, C) | = | 73 (25.8 %) |
| Students Approaching Learning Outcome (C-, D range) | = | 48 (17.0 %) |
| Students Failing to Meet Learning Outcome (F) | = | 15 (5.3 %) |
| Students Withdrawing from courses | = | 5 (1.8 %) |

Conclusions

Category Assessment Results

More than three-quarters (75.9%) of students enrolled in Fall 2010 semester Humanities General Education courses successfully completed the course with a grade of C or higher, indicating that these students fulfilled course assignments and objectives according to their faculty. Only 7.1% of students failed to complete course requirements (and 1.8% of those withdrew for reasons unknown to the subcommittee).

These results show a considerable improvement over the most recent (2007) General Education (Humanities) assessment, which found that 67% of students met or exceeded the Humanities General Education learning outcome. That assessment, however, used a different instrument, namely a specially-designed short examination administered to 505 students taking General Education (Humanities) courses, of which a 20% sample were evaluated by the subcommittee.

Conclusions About Assessment Instrument & Recommendations for Next Assessment Cycle

This instrument assumed that final course grades are a reliable indicator of whether the Humanities General Education learning outcome has been met. While the assumption is reasonable insofar as students who pass the course with a C or better can be presumed to have demonstrated in their work and class performances competency in the learning outcome that designated the course as General Education (Humanities), there is no guarantee that any student's final course grade is directly reflective of their exceeding, meeting, approaching, or failing to meet the Humanities learning outcome in particular. Students may, for instance, excel on assignments or elements of the course that promote the learning outcome but may fail an assignment or course element that is not chiefly or at all designed to promote the learning outcome. The converse may also be true. Although members of the subcommittee reviewed some of the syllabi for the sampled courses, we were unable to isolate student results on an assignment-by-assignment basis. More accurate and targeted results might follow from asking faculty *in advance of an assessment cycle* to report students' grades on particular assignments that faculty designate as particularly engaging the Humanities learning outcome. To approach faculty after a semester has ended and request specific assignment data is not a feasible mechanism, but if faculty know in advance of their participation in this assessment, then they can (1) designate specific assignments and provide meaningful descriptions of them, and (2) provide assignment-specific results that focus on the Humanities learning outcome and minimize the impact of external variables.