

## **A Summary of General Education Assessment AY 2002 - 04**

General Education Assessment was mandated by the senate in 2001. In 2002-2003, writing rubrics were developed and an analysis of student writing was conducted. Also, surveys of students and faculty in Areas IB and IC were conducted. In 2003-2004, surveys of students and faculty in Areas ID and MI were conducted. Syllabi from upper division courses were reviewed by the General Education Assessment Task Force. Syllabi from lower division courses were reviewed by the General Education committee. The GE committee also examined course offering and enrollment data. This document summarizes findings from these efforts. More information including the full reports are available online at [http://www.csufresno.edu/academics/forms\\_policies/general\\_ed.shtml](http://www.csufresno.edu/academics/forms_policies/general_ed.shtml).

### **General Education Writing Rubrics**

General Education Scoring Guides were developed for Areas IB and IC. The overall quality of student writing in the sciences was scored lower than the overall quality of writing in the arts and humanities or in writing overall. Student abilities to think critically, to capture and express their thinking generated some of the best scores. It is clear from the comments of faculty participating in the rubric evaluation process that the development of rubrics is important and that the alignment of the assignment to the rubric made a significant difference in the results. To the extent that the curriculum is aligned to outcomes and the assignments and rubrics are well designed, learning is documented, and embedded assessment can be used to measure educational effectiveness. One of the lessons is to encourage faculty to use rubrics and help them design effective writing assignments to apply them to. A second lesson is that assessment processes that are embedded in class work bridge potential problems with student motivation because they represent real work both to the students completing the assignments and to the faculty assigning them. Finally, embedding the use of writing rubrics in GE courses would likely enhance faculty development and lead to better alignment of the courses to desired learning outcomes.

### **Syllabus Review of General Education Courses**

Fall 2003 syllabi were reviewed in terms of the student learning outcomes outlined for the GE area in which the course was taught and campus requirements for course syllabi. For upper division courses, the Fall 2003 course syllabi were also compared to the model syllabi originally submitted to and approved by the General Education Committee. Among the findings were:

1. many syllabi list instructor based course objectives rather than student learning outcomes.
2. there is a significant disconnect between the model syllabus submitted by the department and approved by the General Education committee and the syllabus distributed to students Fall 2003.
3. many of the writing assignments given to students were due within the last week of the semester and most did not include any provision for feedback to students.
4. nearly 20% of the course syllabi did not meet the 4000-word writing requirement approved by the Academic Senate. An additional 30% of the syllabi were unclear about how that assignment is met.
5. fewer than 60% of the upper division syllabi specify primary source or non-textbook reading assigned in the semester.

6. some syllabi had one or more of the required policy statements missing and a number did not include a sufficiently detailed course calendar nor offer clear statements on attendance and makeup work policies.

A number of recommendations came out of the review. Among them were the following.

1. Crisper statements of student learning outcomes should be developed
2. GE course syllabi should have a stronger connection to the model syllabi submitted approved by the General Education Committee.
3. Connections between student learning outcomes and specific course elements should be more explicit in the syllabus.
4. Campus policy urging GE faculty to include an iterative approach in which students receive instructive feedback and an opportunity to revise their work should be amended to require that iterative approach.
5. GE course syllabi should do a better job of detailing how they meet the 4000-word writing requirement, including a description of the assignment components, methodology, goals of the assignment, and criteria/standards against which they would be evaluated.
6. GE course syllabi should require sustained reading of primary source or non-textbook assignments to enhance student command of language, rhetoric, and argumentation.
7. Compliance with requirements for campus syllabi should be improved.
8. Unambiguous statements of attendance and makeup work policies should be included in course syllabi.
9. Every four years, students enrolled in our upper division writing-intensive “W” courses be given the same ACT CAAP Test of Writing Skills.
10. Students enrolled in upper division writing “W” courses should be given the ACT CAAP Writing Essay Test (alternating between the administrations of the ACT CAAP Test of Writing Skills beginning two years after its first use)
11. On an experimental one-semester basis, students enrolled in courses meeting the GE Area IC requirement be given the ACT CAAP Reading Test. At the same time, two large sections (50+ students each) of the freshman University 1 course should also be given the same reading test.
12. Learning outcomes for each GE Area of study should be reviewed

Collection and review of GE course syllabi is scheduled again for Fall 2005. The call for syllabi will be supplemented with a request for all materials describing writing assignments-including the assignment components, methodology, goals of the assignment and criteria/standards against which they are evaluated. The review will also report on progress made in bringing syllabi into compliance with university policy and matching the models on file for each course.

### **Student Surveys of General Education**

A survey instrument was developed to gather student feedback on the quality of the educational experience students have in the GE program. Student survey results were augmented by data elements pulled from the campus’s PeopleSoft student database. Analysis shows that:

1. As the student’s expected grade in the course went up, the average number of non-class hours they reported spending on the class tended to go up.

2. Students expecting Bs or As in their classes tended to respond that the number of class hours they devoted was adequate, and students expecting Cs or Ds did not. There were no differences in grade expectations by gender or by class standing. Student age categories and native language categories show some spotty differences in grade expectations. Students in ID were less likely to have expected grades in line with actual grades than was the case in other areas.
3. More students reported they retained 13-15 units of coursework through the semester than any other level of unit load. More students reported they worked 17-32 hours per week through the semester than any other number of employment hours. These patterns were consistent for students who expected As, Bs, and Cs. Students expecting D grades were too few to summarize. This evidence supports the conclusion that unit load and weekly employment hours are independent of student grade expectations.
4. Student ability to correctly anticipate their course grade is related to frequency of instructor feedback.
5. Whether students entered as freshmen or transfer students and their performance on the ELM/EPT are almost completely unrelated to final course grades in upper division GE courses. Actual GPA and expected course grade explain 75% of the variance in final grades.
6. Students appear to wait until their senior year to take IB courses
7. Respondents in IB courses were less likely to indicate that their course experience had enhanced their ability to perform cognitive tasks above the recall and comprehension levels.
8. Almost 97% of respondents indicated course objectives were clearly stated in the course syllabus
9. Nearly all respondents indicated they understood the way the course reflects the goals of the GE program. However, a minority of respondents indicated they did not understand how specific goals of the course relate to goals of General Education.

### **Faculty Surveys of General Education**

Faculty surveys were gathered at the same time the student instruments were distributed to GE courses. Faculty were asked to comment on the types of classroom assignments they made; how they spent their GE class time; their assessment of student preparedness, motivation, and abilities; and the importance of a set of generic course objectives.

**Classroom Assignments.** Faculty responded to a series of items whose common stem asked them to identify the number of times in their GE class they made specific assignments in their GE class.

1. **Reading.** Across the four areas of General Education, faculty tended to assign one or two textbooks or other book-length sets of course materials. Other reading assignments made included newspapers/magazine articles and internet sources.
2. **Writing.** Faculty tended to make writing assignments of 1 to 4 pages, with short answers of less than a page a close second, followed at some distance by papers of 5 to 9 pages in length. Faculty reported providing written comments to students relatively frequently and requesting revision of student writing relatively infrequently.
3. **Testing.** Faculty tended to give numerous in-class exams and/or quizzes, often with essay questions included. Faculty assigned take-home exams and/or quizzes relatively infrequently

4. **Other Activities.** Web site development was rarely assigned but students were sometimes required to prepare presentations and/or give performances in class.

Analysis of classroom assignments by GE Area showed significant differences across the four GE Areas. Area IB and MI faculty assigned more internet work and papers of 10 pages or longer than the typical expected while Area IC faculty underutilized both. In testing, faculty in Areas IB and ID tend to give more in-class exams and quizzes and faculty in Areas IC and MI tend to give more take-home exams and quizzes. Area IB, IC and ID faculty assigned more essay questions on their exams and quizzes while Area MI faculty assigned fewer essay questions on their exams and quizzes than expected. Area IC and ID faculty assigned fewer Web site developments and presentations/ performances than expected but Area MI faculty assigned more in both categories than expected. Although faculty tended to handle writing assignments with differing frequency, they reported providing students comments on their writing and requiring students to revise their written work with about the same frequency across the four GE Areas. While virtually all faculty reported giving a final examination, faculty teaching Area IB courses give more final exams that are comprehensive in nature (69%) than faculty in Area IC (44%), Area ID (10%), and Area MI (46%).

**Class Time in GE.** Faculty reported how they allocated their class time in General Education classes. Weighted averages and area average ranges are shown below. The third column reports the GE Area with the low value and the high value, separated by a comma.

<u>Weighted Average</u>	<u>Range in GE</u>	
	<u>Area Averages</u>	<u>GE Area Low, High</u>
53% lecturing	39% to 63%	IC, MI
10% answering student questions	7% to 12%	MI, IC
13% asking student questions	8% to 23%	MI, IC
6% small group interactions	4% to 9%	IB, IC
7% testing	7% to 8%	
1% role playing	0.3% to 1.5%	
4% student presentations	2% to 9%	IC, ID
2% student writing	0.2% to 2.6%	IB, IC
3% other (including videos, guest lectures)	2% to 6%	ID, IB

**Student Preparedness, Motivation, and Abilities.** Faculty responded to a set of queries asking them to assess their student's preparedness, motivation, and abilities and what the percentage should be on each measure. Reported below are the weighted averages for each measure.

<u>Weighted Average</u>	<u>Weighted Average</u>
<u>What Percent of Students Are:</u>	<u>What Percent of Students Should Be:</u>
48% are prepared for class	90% should be prepared for class
35% are independent learners	78% should be independent learners
37% are intellectually curious	86% should be intellectually curious
69% are motivated by getting degree	71% should be motivated by getting degree
48% are motivated by grades only	22% should be motivated by grades only
63% are competent users of technology	85% should be competent users of technology

44% are competent analytically  
53% are competent readers  
48% are competent writers

88% should be competent analytically  
94% should be competent readers  
93% should be competent writers

**Course Objectives.** Faculty were asked to rank order six generic course objectives: content mastery, independent learning, interest in further study, creative thinking, understanding applications, and problem solving. The means by GE Areas show no statistical significance, but the means by course objective are highly significant. Taken together with information on assigned tasks (above) it is clear that while faculty showed differing patterns by GE Area in the frequency with which they assigned classroom tasks, they do not show differing patterns in the goals they hope to achieve in the semester using those tasks.

### GE Enrollment Numbers

The General Education Committee examined enrollments and enrollment patterns in GE courses for Fall 2002, Spring 2003 and Fall 2003 semesters. A “concentration ratio” was used that measured the percentage of FTEs in the top 4 courses and 4 departments by GE area. As shown in the table below, the highest concentrations by departments are in the Arts areas (C1,C2 and IC) and the lowest in MI. The others appear to be reasonably consistent and the range doesn’t seem to be changing much over time with the exception of ID. In that area, a new course has captured 16% of the enrollments in just 2 semesters and the department has almost 40% of the enrollment in the area.

**Percentage of FTES in GE Area  
by largest 4 courses and departments**

Area	Top 4 Courses	Top 4 Departments
A3	58%-67%	68%-69%
C1	58%-59%	91%-93%
C2	71%-82%	83%-86%
D3	55%-57%	67%-70%
E	57%-64%	67%-76%
IB	60%-70%	65%-76%
IC	63%-72%	89%-90%
ID	60%-70%	71%-80%
MI	42%-45%	45%-56%

Colleges are represented in the General Education program as would be expected. About 85% of enrollments in GE are in the arts and sciences (College of Arts and Humanities (30%), College of Science and Mathematics (25%), and the College of Social Sciences (30%)). The numbers are consistent over the three semesters. General education composes a relatively large share of total enrollments in the College of Social Sciences (60-74% depending on the semester) and somewhat less in Science and Math (43-48%) and Arts and Humanities (49-54%).

GE enrollments are crucial to several departments. Nineteen departments have over half their enrollments (in FTES) in general education courses. While the percentages vary somewhat

by semester, for Fall 2003, over 75% of the ftes in Sociology, Women Studies, Physics, Political Science, Geography, Philosophy, and Anthropology were in GE courses.

Several other points of interest in the data are:

1. In the oral communication area only about 10% of the enrollments are in persuasion while the rest are about evenly split between public speaking and group discussion
2. FTES per section in English 1 are about 10% higher in fall semesters than spring
3. About 80% of the enrollments in B1 are in Chemistry and Physics
4. About 80% of the enrollments in B2 are in Biol 10 (over 50%) and BioSc 1A
5. About 30% of the enrollments in C1 are in Drama 62 while the 8 smallest classes account for about 20% of the enrollments.
6. While there are a large number of foreign language courses approved for general education, they account for less than a third of area C2 enrollments.
7. About 75% of the enrollments in D3 are in courses offered by the College of Social Sciences.
8. About 75% of Area E (life long understanding and self development) enrollments are in nutrition, human sexuality, life-span development, contemporary health issues, leisure and psychology.
9. Over half the enrollments in Area IB (integrative science) are in courses taught outside the College of Science and Mathematics.
10. Area IC enrollments are predominantly in English (40%), Music (20%) and Philosophy (20%).
11. Enrollments in GE courses constitute 30-35% of total FTES.
12. Sections range in size from very small (single digits) to very large (mid 200s) but the mean size in most areas is in the 30-50 range. Areas B1 and B2 are the exceptions with near 100 in large lectures.
13. Enrollments are fairly evenly distributed across areas of GE with 5-7% of total enrollments in each of the areas-with the exception of areas C2, D3 and E1 which are in the 10% range. This could indicate many students take these courses for other than GE credit.