**GE D1 American History SLO Evaluation Report July 2022:**

**Background/Description of GE Program ePortfolio:**

Prior to the 2017-2018 AY, departments/programs were responsible for assessing GE student learning outcomes and submitting a report every year for the GE Committee to review. This system had several weaknesses. Departments and programs were responsible for deciding which of the two to four outcomes designated for a specific GE Area to assess; thus some outcomes were evaluated multiple times within a year and others were not evaluated at all in certain years. It was also not possible for departments to access and evaluate a representative sample of student work, nor was it possible to compare the results from GE courses in the same GE Area taught by different departments/programs, because each department/program used its own criteria/rubrics. Finally, the GE Committee was not able to review and analyze the GE assessment reports in a comprehensive fashion, since the committee was also tasked with reviewing all GE curriculum proposals, as well as with discussing and updating GE policies and procedures.

Therefore, Fresno State developed a proposal for a new system of evaluating GE student learning outcomes during the 2014-2015 AY. The proposal was approved by Fresno State’s Academic Senate in May 2017 and by Dr. Joseph Castro in August of 2017. Essentially, all freshmen and transfer students admitted to Fresno State beginning in Fall 2018 will submit one designated assignment aligned to one GE student outcome from lower-division (for freshmen) and upper-division (for freshmen and transfer students) GE courses to a GE Program ePortfolio. Students will also write 300-word reflections (freshmen write three and transfer students write one) about their learning and submit these to the GE Program ePortfolio. The GE Program ePortfolio was set up by the Director of Assessment and students were automatically enrolled. Handouts, videos, and other resources that were posted previously to Blackboard were uploaded to Canvas when the campus transitioned from Blackboard to Canvas.

During the first year of implementation (2017-2018 AY), efforts focused on electing members to the new GE Assessment Subcommittee and on approving common rubrics to be used to evaluate GE student learning outcomes. Fresno State’s GE student learning outcomes were approved by the Academic Senate in 2010. These forty outcomes are evaluated on a five-year schedule. In the 2021-2022 AY, the Director of Assessment selected a random sample of student submissions for the three learning outcomes in Area D1, American History. The Chair of the GE Assessment Subcommittee selected two faculty members from the subcommittee to assess each learning outcome. The Director of Assessment collaborated with each team of subcommittee members to determine which assignments aligned well with the relevant learning outcome. The Director of Assessment then provided a random sample of assignments to the team and they applied the appropriate rubric to assess the assignments and determine student proficiency in each learning outcome.

**GE Assessment Subcommittee: Evaluation and Norming Process:**

The GE Assessment Subcommittee had previously reviewed and approved common rubrics for evaluating each of the three GE learning outcomes designated for GE Area D1. Prior to conducting the assessment, the Director of Assessment met with each faculty team for the purpose of norming. Each team member had independently reviewed a sample of student work and used the rubric to evaluate the work. Where there were discrepancies in the team members’ ratings of proficiency or questions about the rubric criteria, the Director of Assessment and team members discussed the reasons for the differences and reached a consensus on how to apply the rubric going forward. The director and faculty team also discussed how to apply the rubric in the context of a lower division GE course, given that the writing requirement for these courses is 1,000 words for the semester. The faculty teams then independently scored all of the selected assignments. After scoring the work, faculty teams met to identify common strengths and weaknesses. A third reviewer scored all assignments on which the two reviewers did not agree about proficiency.

**Student Learning Outcomes and measures (assignments) used to evaluate D1 proficiency:**

***Student Learning Outcomes***

Upon completion of an Area D1 course (American History), a student will be able to:

1. Trace the historical development of American documents, institutions, and ideals, including the Constitution of the United States and the operation of representative democratic government.

2. Describe the origins of American social, political, cultural, and economic institutions and how they have changed over time.

3. Analyze and synthesize historical sources, including primary and secondary documents, and place them in their historical context.

***Assignments:***

The two courses that satisfy Area D1 requirements are History 11 and History 12, which cover American History to 1877 and from 1877 respectively. The Assessment Team members and Director of Assessment selected assignments that best aligned with each of the D1 learning outcomes.

For learning outcome 1, the assignments covered a variety of documents, institutions, and ideals. These included the Constitution, the Civil Rights Amendments, The 19th Amendment, equality, feminism, civil rights, the institution of slavery, racism, patriarchy, democracy, freedom, and economic opportunity.

For learning outcome 2, the assignments included a number of social, political, cultural, and economic institutions, including the Constitution, checks and balances, political parties, the military, religion, patriotism, capitalism, slavery, socialism, organized labor, industrialization, the Great Society, the New Deal, the Women’s Rights Movement, and the Civil Rights Movement.

For learning outcome 3, the assignments included several types of primary sources, including narratives and reflections, diaries, journals, and historical records and documents. Secondary sources included the works of historians, social elites, and journalists.

**RESULTS**

**Results for Area D1, Learning Outcome 1**

The evaluation of D1 learning outcome 1 resulted in the following ratings:

* Proficient 19 (73.1%)
* Developing 6 (23.1%)
* Incomplete 1 ( 3.8%)

Students were rated proficient if they scored 4 (advanced) or 3 (proficient) on the rubric. Students were rated developing if they scored 2 and incomplete if they scored a 1.

Inter-rater reliability was 88.8%, slightly below Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%.

For assignments rated proficient, reviewers made comments such as these:

* Developed the paper well
* Well-developed and detailed content
* Good use of examples
* Origins and development discussed
* Lines of analysis supported by examples
* Several points in history discussed in well-structured paper

For arguments rated developing, reviewers made comments such as these:

* Many events listed, but they did not flow
* No clear or developed examples
* Time periods not well defined
* Not clear which institution(s) were being discussed
* Many institutions noted, but discussion very short
* Needed more discussion of origin of the institution

In summary, assignments rated proficient were developed well, with clear lines of analysis and supporting examples. They discussed the origins and development of the documents, institutions, and ideals that were presented. The papers were well organized. Assignments rated developing could have improved by specifying the subject(s) of analysis, considering the origin and subsequent development of the subject, developing the analysis in more detail, and incorporating more supporting examples.

**Results for Area D1, Learning Outcome 2**

The evaluation of D1, Learning Outcome 2 resulted in the following ratings:

* Proficient 30 (85.7%)
* Developing 5 (14.3%)

Students were rated proficient if they scored a 4 (advanced) or 3 (proficient) on the rubric. Students were rated developing if they scored a 2 on the rubric.

Inter-rater reliability was 88.5%, slightly below Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%.

For assignments rated proficient, reviewers made comments such as these:

* Different time periods discussed
* Analysis supported by examples well
* Two time periods discussed with good analysis
* Good presentation format, with two time periods and examples to support analysis
* Several different time periods, each supported by examples
* Strong analysis
* Excellent outline/presentation format
* Uses multiple examples to clearly support a thesis

For assignments rated developing, reviewers made comments such as these:

* Origin discussed, but no subsequent time period included
* Limited discussion of a single time period
* Origin not clear
* Presentation of argument was weak

In summary, papers rated proficient discussed the institution(s) being analyzed over time, were clearly structured, and featured strong analysis and supporting examples. Papers rated developing tended to focus on a single time period rather than analyzing changes over time or included limited support for the claims being advanced.

**Results for Area D1, Learning Outcome 3**

The evaluation of D1, Learning Outcome 3 resulted in the following ratings:

* Proficient 23 (76.7%)
* Developing 7 (23.3%)

Students were rated proficient if they scored a 4 (advanced) or 3 (proficient) on the rubric. Students were rated developing if they scored a 2 on the rubric.

Inter-rater reliability was 100%, exceeding Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%.

On assignments rated as proficient, faculty reviewers made comments such as these:

* Substantial discussion of the time period and important historical events
* Discussed credibility of source(s) well
* In-depth analysis of points being made by the source
* Clear structure of the points that the source makes
* Includes textual evidence in the analysis
* Presents multiple points from the source and critically evaluates them
* Includes several different sources and discusses credibility
* Clear and detailed description of when/why the source was written
* Cites evidence from supporting sources

On assignments rated developing, faculty reviewers made comments such as these:

* Does not discuss credibility of sources explicitly or implicitly
* Uses many sources, but does not explain their function or purpose toward the thesis
* Mostly a report of what the source said, no analysis of what the source said or historical events
* Very limited information about the time period or historical events related to the source’s writings.

**Disaggregated Assessment Data for Area D**

Disaggregated assessment data is an important element of a university’s Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) efforts.[[1]](#footnote-1) The assessment results for Area D were analyzed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine whether there were equity gaps in the results. For first generation students, 76% of assignments were rated proficient, compared to 69% of students who were not part of that group. For historically underrepresented students, 75% of the assignments were rated proficient, compared to 70% of students who were not part of that group. For women, 81% of assignments were rated proficient, compared to 63% of men.[[2]](#footnote-2) No students in this sample of assignments identified as non-binary.

The disaggregated data are shown in the following table:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Area D Assessment Proficiency AY 2021-22 | |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Column1** | **Column2** | **Column3** | **Column4** |
|  |  | **Percentage Proficient** | **Significant Difference (.05)** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **All Students (n = 188)** |  | 74% | N/A |
|  |  |  |  |
| **First Generation** |  |  |  |
|  | Yes | 76% | No |
|  | No | 69% |  |
| **Sex** |  |  |  |
|  | Female | 81% | Yes |
|  | Male | 63% |  |
|  | Nonbinary | 0% |  |
| **Historically Underrepresented Status** | |  |  |
|  | Yes | 75% | No |
|  | No | 70% |  |

The disaggregated data are noteworthy because there was not an equity gap in the results for first generation students or historically underrepresented groups. About two-thirds of Fresno State students identify as first generation and Fresno State is a both a Hispanic Serving Institution and an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Institution. A number of General Education courses in Area D are offered by Ethnic Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality departments, giving our students a sense of connection that translates into positive academic performance.[[3]](#footnote-3) Many of the assignments from the different departments that offer Area D GE courses that were reviewed by the subcommittee provided students with an opportunity to use their critical thinking skills to analyze a social science issue or to select topics or historical figures of interest to them.

**Conclusions**

The results of the assessment of Area D1 (American History) were solid. For Learning Outcome 1 (historical development of American documents, institutions, and ideals), 73.1% of submissions were rated proficient. For Learning Outcome 2 (social, political, cultural, and economic institutions), 85.7% of the submissions were rated proficient. For Learning Outcome 3 (primary and secondary sources), 76.7% of the submissions were rated proficient. These scores fell below Fresno State’s 90% proficiency benchmark for GE Assessment. However, over three-fourths of the submissions were proficient across the three Area D1 learning outcomes and all but one of the remaining submissions were rated “developing,” with only one submission rated incomplete. Thus, for assignments that are not proficient, students are putting in effort on their assignments, but need more assistance to reach proficiency.

For Area D overall (D1 and D2), the disaggregated data showed that students with first generation status and historically underrepresented status had a higher percentage of papers rated proficient when compared to students who were not in these groups. These differences were not statistically significant. Women had a higher percentage of papers rated proficient when compared to men and these results were statistically significant.

Faculty reviewer comments suggest two primary directions for improving proficiency in Area D1 courses. The first is skill development. Many of the developing papers needed more examples, more evidence, or more analysis to support the points being made. Others were not clearly structured so that a thesis and/or supporting arguments were evident. Students could be encouraged to take advantage of campus resources such as the Writing Center or the Learning Center to develop these skills. The second is adherence to the requirements of the assignment. Assuming that the prompt has been developed to align with one or more Learning Outcomes, students need to be able to decode the prompt and understand what is required. Students could be assisted in this skill in a variety of ways, such as decoding activities in class, reviewing examples of proficient student work, or taking advantage of campus learning resources.

Another important action step is to ensure that the designated assignment in each GE course aligns with one or more Student Learning Outcomes for that GE Area. If the designated assignment for a course does not align well, then student work could appear not to be proficient even though the student adhered to the requirements of the assignment. Many lower division GE courses are taught by lecturers who may be less connected to campus communications than tenured/tenure track faculty. Some part time lecturers are hired near the start of a semester because openings in the schedule have suddenly occurred. And busy tenured/tenure track faculty have many demands on their time and many campus communications competing for their attention as they get their courses prepared for a new semester. It will be important to redouble efforts to ensure that all faculty teaching GE courses are aware of the Learning Outcomes for their area and also realize that they need to design an assignment that adheres to one or more Learning Outcomes.

One more challenge is the workability of assessing proficiency for each GE Learning Outcome in a single assignment. The minimum writing requirement for lower division GE courses is 1,000 words. The GE Learning Outcomes for some areas (such as A3 Critical Thinking) are discrete and can be assessed in a single assignment in a course where students are writing about 1,000 words in a term. Other Learning Outcomes include substantial content and it is difficult for an assignment of 1,000 words or less to cover the totality of that content. The Learning Outcomes for Area D1 include substantial course content. The GE Assessment Subcommittee should discuss this issue in AY 2022-23.

**Faculty Team for Area D1 Learning Outcomes 1 and 2: Dr. Yushin Ahn and Dr. Silvana Polgar**

**Faculty Team for Area D1 Learning Outcome 3: Dr. María Dolores Morillo and Dr. Sunantha Teyarachakul**

**University Director of Assessment: Dr. Douglas Fraleigh**

1. . Ruth Williams, “Culturally Responsive Assessment, What to Tackle First,” NIOLA, December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . The difference between first generation students and students who were not part of that group were not statistically significant (.05 level), nor was the difference between historically underrepresented students and students who were not part of that group. The difference between men and women was statistically significant. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . Christine Sleeter, “The Academic Value of Ethnic Studies: A Research Review,” NEA, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)