

General Education Assessment Strategy - University of Idaho - 2018

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This plan was developed by the General Education Assessment Committee and reviewed by the Vice Provost of Academic Initiatives, Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment, Faculty Senate, University Committee on General Education, and University Curriculum Committee.

Historical Context:

The General Education Assessment Plan was originally established 22 June 2013 and modified 8 June 2013; 6 June 2014, and 1 April 2018. It was originally developed by Rodney Frey, former Director of General Education; and Jane Baillargeon, Assistant Director of Institutional Research and Assessment. The original review was conducted by Jeanne Stevenson, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; Bruce Pitman, Vice Provost for Student Affairs/Dean of Students; Katherine Aiken, Dean of the College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences; and Paul Joyce, Dean of the College of Science

Synopsis:

This proposal outlines a new overall assessment strategy for General Education, as well as a process to create faculty tools to score assessment artifacts as part of the academic assessment process, and the resources to collect, interpret findings, and render recommendations and make curricular and pedagogical modifications based on assessment.

Context and Rationale:

General Education is the single largest “unit” within the University of Idaho, providing up to 28% of the baccalaureate degree curriculum for well over 10,000 students. It is a curriculum for all undergraduate students, regardless of major, and contributes to degree plans in eight different colleges: Agriculture and Life Sciences; Art and Architecture; Business and Economics; Letters, Arts and Social Sciences; Education, Health and Human Sciences; Engineering; Natural Resources; and Sciences. Each semester approximately 160 University of Idaho faculty members offer over 200 General Education courses. The General Education curriculum has a significant impact on the success of University of Idaho graduates as adaptive, lifelong learners.

The General Education curriculum was revised in 2012 to reflect “high impact national best practices” and included critical new components. These components were the ISEM 101 Integrated Seminars, Diversity and International content courses introduced in 2013, the ISEM 301 Great Issues Seminars in 2014, and Senior Experience in 2015. Recalling the Provost Council’s memo of 10 December 2012 and the NWCCU’s directive, the implementation of an assessment strategy is to be a “faculty responsibility.” Towards that end, the university added a University Committee on General Education for course approval and oversight and the General Education Assessment Committee for course assessment using institutional rubrics.

Evaluation of this new curriculum, while detailed and well-constructed initially (See Appendix I) was ultimately inconclusive, slow in process, and/or incomplete. In brief, the issues can be summed up as such: evaluation of ISEM 101 used a common assignment across all sections but

individual instructor preferences skewed the data, the ISEM 301 common artifact had poorly worded prompts and, while the evaluators underwent a norming process, the final results were erratic and inconclusive, and finally the Diversity, International, and Capstone courses have yet to be evaluated.

As with any new curriculum, assessing student learning outcome competencies is essential. The General Education curriculum must be monitored in the future and adjusted to provide the best possible pedagogical and curricular content for its students. In addition, the university's accreditor, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) has identified "the General Education component of undergraduate programs" in its most recent communications as an area of focus.

General Education at the university exists in two distinct areas: Idaho State Board of Education (SBOE) content areas and credit minimums (Board Core) and institutionally designated general education (ISEMs, Diversity, International and Capstone courses). Policies are outline in Board Policy III.N-Statewide General Education (<https://boardofed.idaho.gov/board-policies-rules/board-policies/higher-education-affairs-section-iii/iii-n-general-education/>). State Board courses fall into the six areas of written communication, oral communication, mathematical ways of knowing, scientific ways of knowing, humanistic and artistic ways of knowing, social and behavioral ways of knowing, and institutional designated courses that reflect the institution's mission, vision, and values. These both rely on separate learning outcomes: the state GEMs Learning outcomes for general education (GELOs) and "Learning Matters" our Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs).

General Education Assessment Strategy:

The General Education Assessment Strategy used the provided historical findings as a guide in the plan redesign to focus on evaluating the student learning competencies relative to the SBOE General Education Learning Outcomes and University of Idaho Learning Outcomes. Is designed to be embedded, integrated, sustainable and meaningful: Embedded into instructor grading, integrated into the curriculum, transparent and easy to accomplish and viewed as a meaningful scholarly activity connected to teaching and learning. As a two-fold assessment strategy, this plan is designed to assess specific Gen Ed courses (e.g., ENGL 102 or Gen Ed components, e.g., Humanities) in response to SBOE purposes and to assess the overall learning competencies of our students as they progress from the first year (initial) through their third year (mid-point) and culminating with the senior year educational experience. It is ultimately a competency-focused assessment strategy.

Within the entire General Education curriculum, three pivotal, diagnostic components will be more fully assessed: ISEM 101 Integrated Seminars, ISEM 301 Great Issues Seminars, and the Senior Experience. This assessment strategy will be sustainable, adaptable, and authentic. It will include the fine-tuning of direct and indirect measures and the scoring procedures and norming of the rubrics. Analysis techniques, write-up procedures, and dissemination avenues that ultimately result in curriculum actions and adjustments will be established. Results from our assessments will be used to improve the content and pedagogy of subsequent ISEM

seminars and senior experiences, as well as assessment strategies and activities for future General Education applications.

The General Education assessment strategy for both areas (Board Core/Institutionally Designated Courses) will entail a combination of three primary assessment tools: 1. assessment artifacts/signature works, 2. Student self-assessment and 3. senior and alumni surveys conducted by GEAC (See Table 1). Board Core courses will undergo an additional rotating periodic content review conducted by UCGE (See Table 2).

Artifact/Signature Work assessment will be initially conducted by the General Education Assessment Committee in tandem with the voluntary instructor utilizing the approved university rubric (pilot phase), and then artifacts will be randomly chosen by IEA from our LMS (Blackboard) from identified general education course with 'flagged' artifacts evaluated by the instructor using approved GELO or ILO rubrics.

Student self-assessment will be a pre and post course survey (indirect measure) administered by the Director of General Education, to gauge learning activities integration with learning outcomes, and assure that students understand and engage in an integrated curriculum. The assessment of the pre & post course surveys will be conducted by the General Education Assessment Committee.

Senior surveys and the alumni surveys (indirect measures), administered through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment. The surveys include sets of questions that align to the five General Education Learning Outcomes. The assessment will be administered by the Assistant Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment, and the results included in the over-all General Education Assessment data and reports.

Over-Arching Model:

Year One (2018-19) – will be a pilot year utilizing voluntary courses and will focus on both the SBOE GEM areas and ISEM 101:

The SBOE GEM areas of Math, Science, Humanities and Arts, and Social/Behavioral Sciences will have 1 course from each area assessed in both Fall 18 and Spring 19. The approved Idaho State Board of Education competencies rubric will be applied to a self-identified artifact and scored by the instructor. The General Education Assessment Committee will review the findings and actions.

	Fall Semester 2018	Spring Semester 2019
Math	Course #1	Course #2
Science	Course #1	Course #2
Humanities	Course #1	Course #2
Social Behavioral Science	Course #1	Course #2

In addition an ISEM 101 will be evaluated from each semester. The approved Institutional Learning Outcomes rubric will be applied to a self-identified artifact and scored by the instructor. The General Education Assessment Committee will review the findings and actions.

Year Two (2019-20) – will be another pilot year utilizing voluntary courses and will focus on upper division Institutional Courses to include Diversity, International, ISEM 301 and Capstone course with at least one Diversity, International and ISEM 301 Course per semester (F’19/S’20) and two Capstone courses in the spring semester. The approved Institutional Learning Outcomes rubric will be applied to a self-identified artifact and scored by the instructor(s). The General Education Assessment Committee will review the findings and actions.

	Fall Semester 2019	Spring Semester 2020
Diversity Course	Course #1	Course #2
International Course	Course #1	Course #2
ISEM 301	Course #1	Course #2
Capstone		Course #1 & #2

If in year one and two there are no volunteers forthcoming, courses will be selected at random by IEA. The artifact / signature works will be self-selected by the instructor and assessed by GEAC using the approved Institutional Learning Outcomes rubric.

Year Three and Beyond:

SBOE GEM area courses will rotate assessment every three years with one course from each category per semester from the following:

- Written & Oral Communications (20-21, 23-24, 26-27)
- Humanities & Social Science (21-22, 24-25, 27-28)
- Math & Science (22-23, 25-26, 28-29)

Institutionally designed general education courses will rotate assessment every three years with one course from each category per semester from the following:

- ISEM 101 (20-21, 23-24, 26-27)
- ISEM 310 (21-22, 24-25, 27-28)
- Senior Experience (Capstone) (22-23, 25-26, 28-29)

The process of assessment for both State Board General Education and Institutional Designated courses will consist of courses chosen at random by IEA and evaluated through the AMS system. The AMS system connected to the LMS system will utilize artifacts that are instructor scored via Blackboard (with the appropriate and approved standardized rubrics) resulting in a report from IEA. This report will be sent to GEAC which will suggest implementation of change when warranted and help develop actions as necessary for the courses reviewed.

Resources:

With a curriculum entirely developed and sponsored by the faculty from eight colleges, and unlike other university units, General Education does not have a dedicated set of faculty lines from which to draw faculty resources and time to implement an assessment strategy. This makes it wholly dependent on established committee work (GEAC, UCGE, UCC, etc.), which is problematic at this scale. However if utilized in tandem with a faculty reported module planted in our LMS (Blackboard) and then ‘mined’ through our new (as yet un-purchased AMS by Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation) then that data could be added to student satisfaction and course surveys from our IMS (Banner) and we will be able to accomplish these goals. It is imperative that the system the university purchases is robust enough to work with both Blackboard and Banner in generating direct and indirect information into meaningful data for the assessment of general education.