**University of Florida General Education Academic Assessment Plan**

General Education

University of Florida

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University of Florida General Education

Academic Assessment Plan

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# Introduction

As part of an overall assessment of University of Florida undergraduate programs that began in 2008, the General Education Committee undertook a comprehensive, systematic multi-year review of the General Education curriculum and its concomitant approval and assessment processes. Several recommendations emerged from this review, which are listed here.

* *Recommendation 1.* The program must be redesigned to reflect a more comprehensive experience than the previous fragmented model, and that the undergraduate curriculum should include signature experiences for all University of Florida students. In 2009, the university faculty embarked on the development of an interdisciplinary Humanities course as a first step in meeting both recommendations. This resulted in the course “What is the Good Life”, which became a requirement for all UF students beginning with entering freshmen in the Fall 2012 semester.
* *Recommendation 2.*The process for recertification of General Education courses should be revised.
* *Recommendation 3.* A review of selected general education courses was needed to determine that they continue to the meet the Student Learning Outcomes.
* *Recommendation 4.* The Student Learning Outcomes should be reexamined and revised, institutional rubrics created to assess the revised outcomes, and a balanced assessment process for General Education should be developed.

To address Recommendation 4, the University of Florida General Education Committee undertook a review of the General Education assessment process, beginning with the Fall 2011 semester and concluding in the Fall 2012 semester. This plan presents the results of the Committee’s findings and final recommendations for the revised assessment plan. The committee developed a Mission Statement, revised Student Learning Outcomes, selected assessment methods and instruments, established an assessment cycle, and methods and procedures for its implementation.

# University of Florida General Education Mission Statement

The General Education Curriculum supports the mission of the University of Florida by providing undergraduate students with common collective knowledge about the world in which they live. The curriculum enables students to think creatively, reason critically, communicate effectively, and make informed decisions that affect all aspects of their lives. Through general education courses, students gain fresh perspectives and discover new approaches to intellectual inquiry that promote understanding of both the traditional and the newly discovered. To achieve these outcomes, the General Education Curriculum encompasses a breadth of knowledge in composition, diversity, internationalism, humanities, mathematics, physical and biological sciences, and social and behavioral sciences. Ultimately, competence in these areas enables students to better understand themselves, their neighbors, other cultures and times, and the principles governing the natural world and the universe; and to participate fully and responsibly as informed citizens in local, national, and global matters.

# Student Learning Outcomes

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The General Education Committee reexamined and revised the existing General Education Student Learning Outcomes to represent the university faculty’s expectations for student learning in general education. The committee developed the new Student Learning Outcomes guided by the following principles:

* *Principle 1.* The Student Learning Outcomes must represent the three categories of Content, Critical Thinking, and Communication, required for all undergraduate programs by the State University System Board of Governors in regulation 8.016, [Student Learning Outcomes Assessment.](http://assessment.aa.ufl.edu/Data/Sites/22/media/aap/revised_bog-reg_8.016_slo_assessment.pdf)
* *Principle 2.* The SLO categories of Content, Critical Thinking, and Communication must be defined for the University of Florida.
* *Principle 3*. The Student Learning Outcomes must be sufficiently broad in scope to capture the depth and breadth of general education courses at the University of Florida while providing specific learning expectations for Content, Critical Thinking, and Communication for all students.
* *Principle 4.* The new Student Learning Outcomes must be further defined by specific performance indicators and grading rubrics for use institution-wide.

The committee approved the new Student Learning Outcomes at its May 8, 2012 meeting. The revised Student Learning Outcomes and the Category definitions are presented in Table 1.

## Table 1. University of Florida Student Learning Outcomes for General Education

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Definition | Student Learning Outcome |
| *At the University of Florida, all students will:* | | |
| CONTENT | Content is knowledge of the concepts, principles, terminology and methodologies used within the discipline. | Demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the discipline. |
|  |  |  |
| COMMUNICATION | Communication is the development and expression of ideas in written and oral forms. | Communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning clearly and effectively in written or oral forms appropriate to the discipline. |
|  |  |  |
| CRITICAL THINKING | Critical thinking is characterized by the comprehensive analysis of issues, ideas, and evidence before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. | Analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems. |

# Assessment Map for General Education

The committee considered a variety of assessment methods and instruments. In order to obtain a comprehensive, balanced assessment system, the committee selected two direct assessments and one indirect assessment. These are described here.

*Direct assessment 1: ETS Proficiency Profile, Abbreviated Version*

The ETS Proficiency Profile provides eight norm-referenced scores: (a) the Total Score (b) three Skills subscores (critical thinking, reading, writing and mathematics), and (c) four Context subscores (humanities, social sciences and natural sciences) (Educational Testing Service, 2012). This assessment is standardized and provides normative data for University of Florida students that allows for the comparison of University of Florida student performance to that of students at similar institutions nationwide. The abbreviated version of the test takes 40 minutes to complete online, which is a reasonable length and common format for our student population. The ETS Proficiency Profile addresses the critical thinking outcome, partially addresses the content outcome, and does not address the communication outcome.

*Direct assessment 2: Course-embedded assessments*

Because the ETS Proficiency Profile does not address all of the revised Student Learning Outcomes, nor does it address them in the context in which they are achieved in the university’s general education courses, course-embedded assessments serve as a direct measure of student work within the general education curriculum. Course-embedded assessments are specific to the general education disciplinary categories of composition, diversity, internationalism, humanities and the arts, mathematics, physical and biological sciences, and the social and behavioral sciences. These assessments are measured using the institutional rubrics presented in the Methods and Procedures section of this plan.

*Indirect assessment: Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey*

This survey is administered to all undergraduate students at the University of Florida in the spring semester of the odd-numbered years. The survey addresses student perceptions and experiences at the university. [SERU data](http://www.ir.ufl.edu/OIRApps/SERU/signon.aspx) has been collected in the spring semesters of 2009 and 2011, and existing data is available to university faculty, staff, and administrators. Sample sizes are large for this survey, averaging around 20,000 responses per administration. In the 2013 survey there is a series of questions directly addressing student perceptions and experiences in general education.

Table 2 presents the Assessment Map for general education. The map aligns the Student Learning Outcomes with the type of assessment selected to address the outcomes.

## Table 2. General Education Assessment Map

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SLO Category : | Student Learning  Outcome | Direct Assessment | Direct Assessment | Indirect Assessment |
| Content Knowledge | Demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the discipline. |  | Course-embedded assessments | SERU |
| Critical Thinking | Analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems. | ETS Proficiency Profile | Course-embedded assessments | SERU |
| Communication | Communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning clearly and effectively in written or oral forms appropriate to the discipline. |  | Course-embedded assessments | SERU |

# 

# Assessment Cycle for General Education

The complete assessment cycle for general education is biennial. In year 1, the ETS Proficiency Profile and the SERU are administered; in year2, the course-embedded assessments are administered. The committee meets monthly, but not in June, July, or August. Data collected at the end of the academic year are analyzed and evaluated in the following Fall semester. Table 3 presents the Assessment cycle. The cycle begins with the 2012-13 academic year.

## Table 3. Assessment Cycle for General Education

Analysis and Interpretation: September-October

Improvement Actions: Completed by October-November

Dissemination: Completed by December

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SLO Category : | Student Learning  Outcome | Year 1 | Year 2 |
| Content Knowledge | Demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the discipline. | SERU (indirect) | Course-embedded assessments |
| Critical Thinking | Analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems. | ETS Proficiency Profile,  SERU (indirect) | Course-embedded assessments |
| Communication | Communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning clearly and effectively in written or oral forms appropriate to the discipline. | SERU (indirect) | Course-embedded assessments |

# Methods and Procedures

In this section we address the assessment expectation for faculty who teach general education courses, sampling procedures, the selection of course-embedded assessments and measurement procedures, the triangulation process for general education direct and indirect assessment data, and the institutional review and approval process for this plan.

## Assessment Expectations for Faculty Teaching General Education Courses

Faculty members who wish to develop and teach courses with general education classifications are notified that there are the following conditions for such classification. These conditions clarify the expectations for institutional assessment of the general education curriculum. The conditions are:

1. The course (and all of its sections) is in the annual pool to be randomly selected for assessment.
2. Sampling will be stratified by general education discipline classification. Within each discipline courses are randomly selected, and sections within those courses are randomly selected.
3. The faculty who teach the selected general education section(s) are notified of this selection in the semester prior to the assessment administration.
4. Selected faculty are expected to participate fully and include the institutional assessment on the course syllabus as a minimum of 5% and a maximum of 10% of the student’s grade.

## Sampling Procedures

The University of Florida undergraduate population averages around 33,000 students in over 110 majors. The size of the population necessitates sampling, which renders the task manageable and, when appropriately administered, ensures statistical validity. The sampling procedures used at the University of Florida have been developed with the assistance of the Offices of Institutional Assessment and Institutional Planning and Research.

### *Sampling for the ETS Proficiency Profile*

Our sample size for the ETS Proficiency Profile is 400-500 students in randomly selected sections within each general education disciplinary category. We desire a 95% confidence interval for the population mean total scaled score for the Proficiency Profile. Based on the available [comparative data](http://www.ets.org/proficiencyprofile/scores/compare_data/) for the Proficiency Profile Abbreviated Form, we base the sample size calculation on the following assumptions:

1. A mean of individual student scaled scores of 445.0. This is based on an estimate in which the mean individual student scores were 450.2 for seniors and 441.1 for freshmen from 43 doctoral research institutions for senior students (26 institutions for freshmen) that participated in testing of the EPP in between 2006 and 2011, based on 23,463 senior students and 4,015 freshmen students.
2. Because sample sizes are small relative to the population, no finite population corrections were made. However, even though sample sizes are larger than 50, t-values were used instead of Z values when generating the confidence intervals in order to be more conservative (i.es, have wider CIs).

Based on these assumptions and resulting calculations, the sample size of between 400 and 500 students selected at random provides a mean score that is at least within 2.0 scale score points with a 95% confidence level, which is sufficient to determine whether scores are changing over time, yet have the same ability to compare with other institutions (Bowen, 2012).

### *Sampling for the Course-embedded Assessments*

Because there is no psychometric data on the course-embedded assessments, the sample size is larger. Within each general education category we randomly select a sample of the sections, which vary in number by semester and year. This random selection is completed by the Office of Institutional Planning and Research, in cooperation with the Office of Institutional Assessment.

## Selection of Course–embedded Assessments and Measurement Procedures

Faculty members whose general education course sections have been selected for participation in the course-embedded assessment process in any given year will be required to select an assignment within the course they teach for data reporting. The faculty-selected assignments are submitted to the General Education Committee for their review and approval as appropriate assessments for the Student Learning Outcomes. The General Education Committee provides guidance for faculty who wish to develop new assignments or revise existing assignments to measure the Student Learning Outcomes.

The course-embedded assessments are graded using the rubrics shown in Tables 4, 5, and 6. Faculty members enter rubric data into the university’s course management system, Sakai, using a simple online grid. A graphic of the grid is shown in Table 7. Data is collected electronically and analyzed using Item Response Theory graded response models, under the guidance of the Directors of Institutional Assessment and Institutional Research and Planning.

### Table 4. General Education Content Knowledge Rubric

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Performance**  **Criterion** | **Outstanding** | **Satisfactory** | **Unsatisfactory** |
| **Concepts/Principles** | Skillfully and insightfully interprets and applies concepts and principles in the discipline. | Interprets and applies concepts and principles in the discipline. | Fails to interpret and apply course concepts and principles in the discipline. |
| **Terminology** | Demonstrates knowledge and appropriate use of terminology within the discipline. | Demonstrates knowledge of terminology within the discipline. | Fails to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of terminology used within the discipline. |
| **Methodologies** | Demonstrates knowledge of and appropriate application of methods used within the discipline. | Demonstrates knowledge of methods used within the discipline. | Fails to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of methods used within the discipline |

### Table 5. General Education Critical Thinking Rubric

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Outstanding** | **Satisfactory** | **Unsatisfactory** |
| **Explanation of Issues** | Clearly identifies and summarizes main issues and successfully explains why they are problems or how they create questions; identifies embedded or implicit issues, addressing their relationship to each other. | Identifies and summarizes the main issues, but does not explain why they are problems or how they create questions. | Fails to identify, summarize, or explain the main problem or question. Represents the issues inaccurately or inappropriately. |
| **Evidence/Analysis** | Skillfully uses high quality, credible, relevant sources to thoroughly (systematically and methodically) investigate and analyze multiple alternate points of view, revealing important differences or similarities within the topic. | Uses credible, relevant sources to question and analyze alternate points of view, revealing differences or similarities within the topic. | Fails to demonstrate use of sources to support ideas. Shows little to no awareness of evidence and bases analysis on a single source or unclear evidence. |
| **Conclusion** | Discusses implications and conclusions comprehensively, considering all relevant data and evidence. A clear and precise point of view and conclusion are formulated and presented. | Discusses implications and conclusions, considering most but not all the relevant data and evidence. A clear point of view or conclusion is presented. | Fails to formulate and clearly express a clear point of view and does not consider the evidence and data when forming judgments. |

### Table 6. General Education Communication Rubric

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|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Outstanding** | **Satisfactory** | **Unsatisfactory** |
| **Content** | Skillfully demonstrates knowledge of content, audience, and purpose (responsive to the assigned tasks and demonstrating thorough understanding of practices particular to the specific discipline.) | Demonstrates knowledge of content, audience, and purpose, (with a clear focus on the assigned tasks, and demonstrating consistent use of practices particular to the specific discipline.) | Fails to demonstrate sufficient knowledge of content, audience, and purpose, (lacks a clear focus on the assigned tasks and does not use practices particular to the specific discipline.) |
| **Syntax and**  **Mechanics** *Specific to written communication* | Organizational structure is clearly and consistently observable, aided by writer's careful attention to coherence and sophisticated use of transitions. Uses language that skillfully communicates meaning with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error free. | Organizational structure is understood, aided by writer's attention to coherence and use of transitions. Uses language that communicates meaning with fluency, and is nearly error free. | Organizational structure is not observable. Uses language that impedes meaning because of errors in usage. |
| **Delivery**  *Specific to oral communication* | The speaker (presenter) demonstrates compelling and polished performance through posture, gestures, eye contact and vocal expression. | The speaker (presenter) demonstrates appropriate performance through posture, gestures, eye contact, and vocal expression. | The speaker (presenter) fails to demonstrate appropriate performance through posture, gestures, eye contact, and vocal expression. |

### Table 7. Online Data Submission Grid for General Education Course-embedded Assessments

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Outcome** | **O** | **S** | **U** |
| Content |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Critical Thinking |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Communication |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

Key: O = outstanding, S = Satisfactory, U = Unsatisfactory

## Triangulation of Direct and Indirect Assessment Data

We set the following metrics for expected achievement in the direct assessments for students in the general education program.

1. ETS Proficiency Profile Total Scaled Score – this metric is set biennially by the General Education Committee.
2. Course-embedded assessments – 80% of students achieve at the Satisfactory level.

We examine direct assessment data annually and triangulate these data with the SERU data biennially. We examine the data for cross-correlation of the direct assessments with the indirect survey data. Program modifications are based on the committee’s analysis and interpretation of these findings, and estimates of the potential effects of program modifications on expected outcomes.

# Program Review and Approval Process

The size and scope of the University of Florida faculty and student body requires that institutional programs be reviewed and approved by representation. Two joint university committees, the General Education Committee and the Academic Assessment Committee, collaborated on the review and approval of this plan. The General Education Committee may revise this plan as necessary to maximize the value of the assessment for the university, and the Academic Assessment Committee maintains responsibility to review and approve any modifications. The 2012-13 membership of these committees is shown in Appendices A and B.

# Assessment Oversight

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Department Affiliation** | **Email Address** | **Phone Number** |
| Bernard Mair, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, General Education Committee Administrative Co-Chair | Office of the Provost | [bamair@ufl.edu](mailto:bamair@ufl.edu) | 846-1761 |
| Creed Greer, Senate General Education Committee Co-Chair 2012-13 | Dial Center for Written and Oral Communication | [cgreer@ufl.edu](mailto:cgreer@ufl.edu) | 392-5421 |
| Timothy S. Brophy, Director, Institutional Assessment and Chair, Academic Assessment Committee | Office of the Provost | [tbrophy@aa.ufl.edu](mailto:tbrophy@aa.ufl.edu) | 273-4476 |

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# Appendix A. General Education Committee Members 2012-13

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Last Name | First Name | Title | Department | Role |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Mair | Bernard | Associate Provost | Undergraduate Affairs | Chair |
| Greer | Creed | Associate Program Director and Senior Lecturer | Dial Center for Written and Oral Communication | Senate Co-Chair |
| Akcali | Elif | Associate Professor | Industrial Systems and Engineering | Member |
| Brophy | Timothy | Director, Institutional Assessment and Professor | Provost's Office | Liaison |
| Cohen | Alex | Student | Student | Student |
| Colvin | Suzanne | Associate Director | School of Teaching and Learning | Member |
| Curbow | Barbara | Professor | Behavioral Science and Community Health | Member |
| Czarnecka-Verner | Eva | Associate Research Scientist | Microbiology and Cell Science | Member-S |
| Dobrin | Sidney | Associate Professor | English | Member-S |
| Johnson | Melissa | Assistant Director | University Honors Program | Member-S |
| Julian | David | Associate Professor | Biology | Member |
| Krigbaum | John | Associate Professor | Anthropology | Member |
| O'Sickey | Lynn | Associate Director | Academic Advising Center | Liaison |
| Ogram | Andrew | Professor | Soil and Water Science | Member |
| Pigg | Morgan | Professor | Health Education and Behavior | Member |
| Reynolds | Alison | First-Year Writing Coordinator and Lecturer | University Writing Program | Member-S |
| Smith | Brenda | Associate Professor | School of Music | Member-S |
| Taylor | Bethany | Assistant Professor | School of Art and Art History | Member-S |
| Thomson | Robert | Associate Professor and Associate Chair | English | Member-S |
| Weigold | Michael | Associate Dean and Professor | Advertising | Member |
| Weimer | Cayman | Student | Student | Student |

# Appendix B. Academic Assessment Committee Members 2012-13

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Last Name | First Name | Title | Department | Term | Role |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Brophy | Timothy | Professor and Director, Institutional Assessment | Provost's Office |  | Chair |
| Foss | Joanne | Clinical Assistant Professor | Occupational Therapy | 2014 | Senate Co-Chair |
| Berg | Sanford | Distinguished Service Professor | Economics | 2013 | Member-S |
| Casella | Anne Kendall | Senior Lecturer | Food Science and Human Nutrition | 2013 | Member-P |
| Emihovich | Catherine | Professor | School of Human Development and Organizational Studies in Education | 2015 | Member-S |
| Fields | Margaret | Assistant Dean | Dean's Office-Liberal Arts and Sciences | 2014 | Member-P |
| Law | Mark | Associate Dean and Professor | Dean's Office-Engineering | 2014 | Member-P |
| Mair | Bernard | Associate Provost | Undergraduate Affairs |  | Liaison |
| Rosen | Jaclyn | Student | Student | 2013 | Student |
| Weigold | Michael | Associate Dean and Professor | Advertising | 2013 | Member-S and Gen Ed Liaison |
| Xue | Jiangeng | Associate Professor | Materials Science and Engineering | 2015 | Member-P |
| Zeglen | Marie | Assistant Provost and Director | Institutional Planning and Research |  | Liaison |