

CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY POMONA

ACADEMIC SENATE

GE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT POLICY
AS-2156-045/AH

Academic Senate Amended/Adopted 11/17/04
Transmitted to President Ortiz 11/18/04
Accepted by President Ortiz DATE

GE Assessment Policy

Introduction

The assessment of the General Education program (GE) is an outcomes assessment of the program mandated by the Trustees of the California State University (CSU) in Executive Order 595 and by the senior division of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in their Standards. The assessment is expected to address the place of each area of GE and the GE program in a student's education, and, after students have fulfilled this part of the GE requirement, are the expectations of the program being met. These expected outcomes, the policies of how they are to be judged, and conclusions about the expectations are to be published by the Office of Academic Affairs for the campus community. The assessment data remains in the hands of the faculty.

This assessment does not collect information or make judgments about student grades in a course, how effective a teacher may be in a course, or anything about specific requirements of a particular class. It does not even concern itself with the question of whether the outcomes expected for this GE area are explicitly learned in that particular class. Because the assessment is about the outcomes of a program segment that can be fulfilled by a variety of different courses, the outcomes expectations will, necessarily, be broad in nature.

GE Area Assessment Committee Structure

The Ad Hoc GE Assessment Committee proposes the assessment is to be conducted by 16 individual committees, each of which is composed of faculty actively teaching in that area of GE. Each area committee will be supported by a non-voting representative of the Division of Academic Affairs who will provide advice on administrative matters. As a group these faculty are referred to as the "Area -- Assessment Committee." Each Area Committee determines the outcomes expectations and measures the effectiveness of that area of GE. Each Area Assessment Committee submits its report to the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate for review of form and procedures. The Executive Committee forwards the report to the Academic Senate with its recommendations for approval or modification. The policies in the report take effect after the recommendations/modifications of the Academic Senate are approved by the campus president. Courses that are not assessed regularly risk losing their GE status.

Establishing Area Assessment Committees

Cal Poly Pomona has 16 areas defined in its GE program at this time. Some areas involve only a single academic department; others involve numerous academic departments. For each area the Office of Undergraduate Studies (or its successor) will provide the administrative/clerical support for the Area Assessment Committee. It will also provide space for the Area Assessment Committee to store the documentary

evidence under the committee's control and upon which committee decisions have been based for a period of up to five years.

Each year this Office of Undergraduate Studies compiles two lists of faculty who have taught courses in each GE area during the past 12 months. One list is of Tenured/Tenure-track faculty and the other is of Adjunct Faculty who are currently employed by Cal Poly Pomona. This pool of faculty function as a virtual department to set and examine the GE assessment policies and results.

The Office of Undergraduate Studies will poll the pool of faculty to determine initially what procedure the faculty want to use (e.g., meet as a committee of the whole, or select a working group to draft the proposals for the full group to approve), how they want to meet (e.g., once annually at a retreat or more frequently in shorter meetings), and who will chair the assessment effort for that area. A member of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Academic Senate on GE Assessment and the Associate Provost will convene these organizational meetings and serve as resources until a chair of the Area Assessment Committee is elected. The Executive Director of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning (IRAP) will be invited to these initial meetings to describe the services provided by IRAP in support of assessment activities. In general these Area Assessment Committees are expected to be self-sustaining, but if an unexpected event occurs the Office of Undergraduate Studies would need to re-poll the group to get it restarted in its activities.

Adjunct faculty are invited, but not required, to participate in Area Assessment Committees since they are not currently compensated for this kind of activity. Tenured/Tenure-track faculty are expected to participate as part of their assigned related duties. If the pool of faculty decide to have representatives draft policies and review outcomes, Adjunct Faculty will elect their representative(s) from among their number in approximate proportion to their fraction of the total pool. The intent is to have the people who actually teach the GE courses make the academic decisions.

The Provost will appoint an ex officio, non-voting member to work with the faculty of the Area Assessment Committees to help them achieve their assessment goals. The ex officio member is neither an approver nor an enforcer; nor would the ex officio member be eligible to serve as committee chair. The Office of Undergraduate Studies will arrange for committee support to include securing meeting facilities, providing photocopy services, and seeing that calendar schedules are met as well as seeing that all Area Assessment Committee members have the appropriate documents to make their decisions. Among these would be Executive order 595 and the current WASC Standards concerning GE; these must be followed in all Area Assessment Committee decisions. In addition, the area GE Program description currently found on the Academic Affairs web site must either be followed or revised. (To the extent that any recommendations by the Area Assessment Committee approved by the Academic Senate and signed by the campus president change the Area GE requirements, the revised requirements become binding for future campus GE actions, and the Academic Affairs web site and related documents should be updated accordingly.). Historic documents such as the 1986

description of the GE program at Cal Poly, Pomona, the 1994 Cal Poly report to WASC on GE, and course enrollment statistics should be supplied to the Area Assessment Committee as needed.

Area Assessment Committee Charge

In the first annual cycle of GE assessment the Area Assessment Committee should determine the expected outcome(s) for this area of GE. Such a statement should consist of one or possibly two sentences that reflect the purpose of this area in the university curriculum. Because these expectations describe the outcome of this part of GE the statement should not reference anything that happens *during* the classes with GE status in that area.

Next the Area Assessment Committee needs to identify between two and five pieces of Evidence that measure how well the desired Outcomes have been achieved. At least one of these pieces of Evidence must be from some activity occurring after students have completed the area GE classes. For example, students' communications skills in, say, a history class might serve as Evidence of the effectiveness of the communication portions of the GE program, or perhaps the mathematics skills exhibited in an engineering or psychology class would be Evidence of the mathematics GE effectiveness. Surveys of students have only a limited role among these pieces of Evidence.

Evidence could consist of portfolios prepared by students, and assimilated knowledge exhibited in a particular final exam question or portion of a term paper. It should be noted that this latter sort of Evidence of GE effectiveness is distinct from the skills and knowledge required by the particular class. For example, in an essay question on a history test a student could have all the kings of England mixed up and hence do poorly in the history class, but show good logical structure, punctuation, and grammar in the essay so documenting that the basic communication skills have been mastered. There is no simple relation between a student's mastering the expected GE outcomes and his/her grade in a particular class.

Once the GE Area program outcomes have been established and the forms of Evidence determined, then the Area Assessment Committee needs to generate a rubric and set of criteria for meeting these expectations. With these tools Evidence is examined to determine if the GE program outcome expectations have been met. The Area Assessment Committee's first report to the Academic Senate will contain the Outcome statement, the acceptable evidence, and the rubric.

In future GE assessment cycles selected classes will be examined by the Area Assessment Committee using Academic Senate-approved policies to judge the effectiveness of the GE Program. Every course (not necessarily every section) should be examined at least once every five years. At least some of the data should be examined to see if there is a significant difference between native Cal Poly Pomona students and transfer students. Based on the results of these assessments, the rubric or the outcome statement for an area of GE may need to be modified. An annual report by each Area

Assessment Committee should be sent to the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate stating the conclusions drawn from their assessment activities. Any recommendations for a change in assessment policies will be included in that report, and the report will be forwarded to the Academic Senate for its approval and subsequently to the President for his/her approval.

Time Lines

Starting at the beginning of the quarter after the President approves this policy the Office of Undergraduate Studies will begin facilitating the organization of the Area Assessment Committees for Areas B1, B2, B3, and D1 of the lower division GE areas, distributing documents, and arranging meeting schedules. At the start of the second regular quarter after the President's approval of this policy these four Area Assessment Committees will begin formulating outcome statements, evidence lists, and rubrics. After these policies have been approved by the Academic Senate and the President, an annual assessment cycle will begin, and the effectiveness of that part of the GE program evaluated. A table showing this time line is attached. The remaining eight lower division GE areas and the upper division GE will have their time lines shifted back one year by this assessment.

After all the lower division GE areas have been assessed for one full cycle (the end of the second year of the program since the first year produces policies but no assessment) a similar process would begin for upper division GE courses. The upper division GE involves a larger number and more diverse collection of courses. Experience gained working with the more homogeneous lower division GE will help in dealing with the more complex upper division situation. In addition, the WASC Standards require evidence that the upper division GE courses are actually integrating the outcomes of the lower division courses in their respective areas of GE. Clearly this can only be done once the outcomes have been defined and tested in a minimum of one annual assessment cycle.

Annual reports from the Area Assessment Committees would be due at the office of the Academic Senate in electronic format as shown in the time-line table.