
Policies and Procedures for the Assessment of the General Education Program

The General Education Committee

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Background	pg 1
2. Assessment Overview	pg 1
3. Policies	pg 2
4. Procedures	pg 2
5. Description of the Assessment Submissions	pg 4
a. Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric)	pg 4
b. Assessment Findings (Results)	pg 4
c. Operational Plan (Action Steps)	pg 4
d. Status Report (Update on Actions)	pg 5
6. Waivers	pg 5
7. Use of Assessment Reports for the Review of the General Education Program	pg 5
8. Appendices	
a. Appendix A: History of General Education Assessment at UWL	pg 6
b. Appendix B: General Education Planning Survey	pg 7
c. Appendix C: Procedures for the Appeal of a GEAC Revise/Resubmit Decision	pg 9
d. Appendix D: Assessment Process Flow Chart	pg 11
e. Appendix E: GEAC Review Procedures for the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric)	pg 12

BACKGROUND

The General Education Committee (GEC) is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate at UW-L. GEC is responsible for administering the General Education Program and is specifically charged with “conducting a systematic review of the General Education Program by examining existing courses on a regular, rotating basis, and recommending curricular changes.”¹ The systematic assessment of the General Education Program is important to UW-L students, faculty, and departments, and aids UW-L in the level of quality assurance necessary for accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). For a summary of some of the history of General Education Assessment at UW-L, please see Appendix A.

This document describes the policies and procedures developed by Faculty Senate and GEC regarding assessment of courses included in the General Education Program.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

GEC has identified a set of student learning outcomes (SLOs) that students completing the General Education (GE) program should achieve. The UW-L GE SLOs are based on the University of Wisconsin System’s Shared Learning Goals, which were in turn developed using the Essential Learning Outcomes put forth by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The UW-L General Education SLOs thus

demonstrate our institution's engagement with ongoing educational reforms and our adoption of best practices with regard to program-level assessment.

The SLOs for the UW-L GE Program are as follows:

Students will demonstrate knowledge and abilities relating to:

1. human cultures and the natural world;
2. critical and creative thinking;
3. aesthetic perspectives and meaning;
4. effective communication;
5. interaction in intercultural contexts;
6. individual, social, and environmental responsibility.

These are broad learning outcomes for the program as a whole, not for individual courses. For each course, departments must select one of the broad GE SLOs and then write a course-specific SLO. To facilitate the development of high-quality, measurable learning outcomes, the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) website will provide information about course-specific SLOs that could fall within each of these broad GE SLOs.

¹ Faculty Senate Bylaws, II. Faculty Standing Committees, Section K, article 2.

POLICIES

1. Every General Education course will be assessed every two years. General Education Assessment thus operates on a two-year cycle.
2. Every Department or Program which offers a General Education course will respond to a General Education Assessment Planning Survey to GEAC during the spring semester preceding the start of a new assessment cycle. Each Department or Program will indicate: (1) whether each general education it offers will be taught within the next two year cycle, (2) which year the assessment will take place during the cycle, and (3) which one of the 6 General Education Program SLOs the course might assess in the cycle. Departments or Programs may indicate they are uncertain about a courses status.
3. If a General Education course will be offered but not be assessed during a given assessment cycle, the Department or Program offering that course must apply for a waiver from GEC, which (if approved) will exempt the course from assessment for that cycle.
4. In addition to the course-level data, the GEC will make use of other relevant institutional data streams, including the results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). The UW-L Assessment Coordinator will assist the GEC in developing reports from these sources for their use.

PROCEDURES

1. GE Assessment Planning Survey: Due during the spring before the start of a new assessment cycle

- a. Department completes the GE Assessment Planning Survey (see Appendix B), indicating for each course if the course will be offered the next two academic years, the year when it will be assessed, and which of the six GE SLOs will be assessed. Departments are free to assess each course during any semester and year they choose within the two-year cycle.
- b. The GE Assessment Planning Survey results are submitted to GEAC, and accepted if complete.
- c. GEC will send Assessment Planning Survey information back to the Chairs for review one year after their submission. Any changes should be communicated to GEAC.
- d. If the revision results in a Department or Program becoming non-compliant with any GE Assessment Policies, a waiver must be applied for from the GEC.

2. Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric): Due no later than October 1 of the academic year of assessment

- a. Department writes a course-specific SLO that falls within one of the six GE SLOs.
- b. Department develops an assessment task to assess the course-specific SLO.
- c. Department develops an assessment rubric to classify all students in all sections of the course with respect to the course-specific SLO, based on their performance on the task. For assessment rubrics which will require a great deal of time to evaluate, classifying the performance of a random subsample of students may be appropriate; this approach should be described in detail in the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric).
- d. These items are documented for purposes of General Education Program Assessment by submission to GEAC in Taskstream in the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric). GEAC must review and approve the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) prior to the implementation of the assessment. (See Appendix E for a description of what elements are reviewed) If a request to revise and resubmit a task is made, the department or faculty member can make the changes and resubmit. If the department or faculty member disagrees with the decision of GEAC, they may appeal to the GEC. (See Appendix C.)

3. Assessment Findings (Results) and Operational Plan (Action Steps): Due no later than July 1 of the academic year of assessment

- a. Department coordinates instructors to assign the task to all students in all sections of the course.
- b. Department uses the rubric to classify students' performance on the task.
- c. Department analyzes the results and indicates whether changes to curricula, pedagogy, assessment task, or assessment rubric are warranted.
- d. These items are documented for purposes of General Education Program Assessment by submission to GEAC via Taskstream in the Assessment Findings (Results) and Operational Plan (Action Steps) areas.

4. Status Report (Update on Actions): Due no later than July 1 the year following the Assessment Findings (Results) and Operational Plan (Action Steps) submissions.

a. Department documents any changes that were actually made to curricula, pedagogy, assessment task or assessment rubric. This document must directly address the items included in the Assessment Findings (Results) and Operational Plan (Action Steps) and is submitted to GEAC in the Status Report (Update on Actions).

DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSESSMENT SUBMISSIONS

Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric)

Departments must write a course-specific SLO that falls within one of the broad GE SLOs. They then define an assessment task that the student must complete. The task may take on a wide variety of forms (answering multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank questions, solving mathematical equations, drawing charts or plots, giving artistic performances or interpretations, giving oral presentations, writing a dramatic narrative or technical analysis, etc.) but must measure the students' performance with respect to the course-specific SLO and must be clearly documented.

Departments must define an assessment rubric to classify students' performance on the assessment task. For purposes of General Education assessment, rubrics must describe five levels of performance. These five levels have been standardized across the University and are listed below. Note that there is no standardized definition of these categories beyond what is implied by the names themselves; the assessment rubric is what actually provides the course-specific meaning for each category.

- Exemplary
- Proficient/More than satisfactory
- Competent/Satisfactory
- Underdeveloped/Less than satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

The assessment task and assessment rubric together comprise the assessment tools. The GEAC committee will review and approve the assessment tools before the assessment task is administered. The purpose of this review is to help ensure that the assessment tools will produce useful and credible data about the GE SLO. Additional information regarding GEAC's review of the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) is available through their website. If GEAC determines revisions are needed prior to approval, the submitting department is notified and must resubmit the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) after addressing the concerns raised by GEAC. The department may alternately decide to appeal the GEAC revise/resubmit decision (see Appendix C). The departmental appointee is responsible for submitting the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric).

Assessment Findings (Results) and Operational Plan (Action Steps)

The department decides when and how to use the assessment task and who will apply the assessment rubric to classify students' performance. Departments may elect to have each instructor score the results for his or her sections of the course, or assign all of the scoring to a small group. If your department chooses to use a pre and post-test, report the results of the post-test in the rubric. An important feature of effective assessment is that instructors use the criteria consistently when they evaluate student learning. Large variations in the use of criteria can damage the credibility of the results. Finally, the department will

report the proposed changes that will be made to improve student learning outcomes in the course, if any. A change might be made to the course curriculum, pedagogy, or the assessment process in response to assessment outcomes. GEAC does not evaluate Assessment Findings (Results) and Operational Plan (Action Steps) submissions. GEAC simply reports on participation rates and compiles reports about the Assessment Findings (Results) and Operational Plan (Action Steps) to GEC and Faculty Senate. The departmental appointee is responsible for submitting the Assessment Findings (Results) and Operational Plan (Action Steps).

Status Report (Update on Actions)

The department will collectively analyze the assessment results and use these results to make improvements to student learning in the course. The department will report the changes made to improve student learning outcomes in the course, if any. The department or program is responsible for making such determination. GEAC does not evaluate Status Report (Update on Actions) submissions. GEAC simply reports on participation rates and compiles the Status Report (Update on Actions) submissions in reports to GEC and Faculty Senate. The departmental appointee is responsible for submitting the Status Report (Update on Actions).

WAIVERS

A course will be granted a waiver by the GEC, exempting it from assessment for a given assessment cycle, if it is not taught during that period. GEC will also grant a waiver when circumstances exist under which assessment cannot reasonably be expected to occur. Should such circumstances arise, the Department Chair or Program Head should contact the Chair of the GEC with a written request explaining the basis for the waiver. The GEC Chair will arrange for a representative of the Department or Program to appear before a meeting of the GEC to further explain their reasons for requesting the waiver. The GEC will determine whether or not to grant the waiver by majority vote.

USE OF ASSESSMENT REPORTS FOR REVIEW OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

The GEC will review the reports provided by the GEAC and the UW-L Assessment Coordinator in their ongoing review of the GE program. When the results of this review indicate need for further study of or possible refinements to the program, the GEC will take appropriate steps to ensure that the data being generated are used by faculty to improve student learning. Likewise, when the results of the review indicate successful achievement of learning outcomes, this will be noted and communicated to the faculty.

APPENDIX A: History Regarding General Education Assessment at UW-L

In May 2006, during a site visit of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) for purposes of national accreditation, the HLC report identified the General Education Program as an area of concern. Specifically, the report included a section entitled, in HLC language, “student learning and effective teaching,” having a subsection entitled “Evidence that one or more specified Core Components need organizational attention.” One of the three items under this subsection related directly to assessment of General Education: “While there is a process with both direct and indirect measures to evaluate student learning at the program, department, and university levels, these processes are not sufficiently rigorous in either the undergraduate programs, especially in General Education, or graduate programs. The current system does not provide effective mechanisms to assess academic programs with the goal of using assessment data for systematic improvement.”

This HLC report included another section related to, in HLC language, the “acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge,” having a subsection entitled “Evidence that one or more specified Core Components require Commission follow-up.” This section stated, “there is no plan for the systematic assessment of the learning goals associated with the general education curriculum, an essential first step toward determining the effectiveness of the general education program.”

Faculty responded to the HLC report, at least in part, by developing a plan for the assessment of the General Education Program. Faculty Senate formed an ad-hoc committee, the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC), to execute the assessment plan and report to both GEC and Faculty Senate. GEAC became a standing committee in the fall of 2011. Also in fall 2011, the HLC accepted the third and final Monitoring Report from UW-L, approving the University’s responses to the problems identified in the 2006 report.

In the fall of 2014, UWL sought to find a replacement for the General Education Assessment Software that had been used to capture the submissions and reviews by the GEAC. The homegrown tool had become unstable and its storage location needed to be retasked for use for student projects. Faculty and staff participated in an RFP process and Taskstream AMS was selected as a replacement tool to conduct the General Education Assessment reporting and review process. GEAC members participated in the translations of process and forms into the new system. The system went live in fall 2015 and has been in use since that time.

APPENDIX B: General Education Assessment Planning Survey

General Education Assessment Planning Survey for the 2018-20 Cycle

Thank you for your work in submitting this Gen Ed Assessment Plan! Having this information will make it easier for the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) to plan its activities for the 2018-20 cycle.

If you have any questions about how to complete this survey please contact Patrick Barlow, University Assessment Coordinator (pbarlow@uwlax.edu) or Chad Vidden, General Education Committee Convener (cvidden@uwlax.edu). If you need to go back for any reason, be sure to use the "Back" arrow within the survey, not your browser "Back" arrow. Please complete this survey by Sept. 21, 2018. Note that the first deadline for submission of assessment tasks/rubrics for review is Oct. 1, 2018 for courses planning to assess during Fall 2018-Summer 2019 terms.

Flow of the Survey Questions

The following survey collects information that will support the assessment of the General Education Program for the upcoming two-year cycle (2018-2020). For each of your courses in the program, you will be asked to indicate if a course will be offered, what year it will conduct assessment, and the SLO that will be assessed.

The General Education Committee would ask you to complete information for each course taught by your department in the Gen Ed program. You will be able to return through these items to enter information for multiple courses. If you have a block of courses that will be assessed in the same term using the same SLO, you will be able to indicate that also.

Before you start, it will be useful to know the timeframe for when your courses may be offered and the likely learning outcomes they will be assessing. Therefore, it may be useful to consult with your faculty teaching the courses if you are uncertain about these issues.

Please select the Gen Ed course you are reporting on based on the listing below. Select your department first, then the course. Note: Cross-listed courses are combined (ERS 210 and ENG 210 are listed as ENG 210/ERS 210, please contact your peers in the collaborating dept before responding for cross listed courses).

Dept/Program (Dropdown menu expands to show options)

Course Number (Dropdown menu expands to show options)

Will this course be offered during the fall 2018- summer 2020 timeframe?

- Yes, it will be offered
- No, it will not be offered in 2018-19 nor 2019-2020.
- Uncertain at this time

When will this course be assessed in 2018-2020? (If you plan to assess the course over multiple terms, select the first term during which assessment will occur.)

- Fall 2018-Summer 2019 (submitting task and rubric to GEAC Fall 2018)*
- Fall 2019-Summer 2020 (submitting task and rubric to GEAC Fall 2019)*

Which one of the six General Education Student Learning Outcomes will be the focus of assessment in this course? (The GEC is seeking a general sense on what is being assessed in the program and encourages faculty to consider new outcomes to assess rather than those covered in past cycles. The majority of courses have tended to focus on critical and creative thinking. Note selecting human cultures and the natural world allows faculty to address either human cultures or the natural world.)

Students will demonstrate knowledge and abilities relating to ...

- human cultures and the natural world*
- critical and creative thinking*
- aesthetic perspectives and meaning*
- effective communication*
- interaction in intercultural contexts*
- individual, social, and environmental responsibility*

Are there are there other courses in your dept/program that will be assessed in the same academic year and assess the same Gen Ed Student Learning Outcome? If so, please enter those additional course numbers here.

For example, you selected ENG 200 above that will assess in Fall 2018, SLO 4 Effective Communication, and all other ENG 200 level courses will use the same term and SLO, you would enter ENG 201, 202, 203, etc below. Doing this, you will not need to report each course separately.

Do you have another course to enter? (Answering NO will close the survey out, a YES will allow you to enter additional courses.) *(Survey has room for ten courses to be entered)*

- Yes*
- No*

APPENDIX C: Procedures for the Appeal of a GEAC Revise/Resubmit Decision

SCOPE

This document describes the policies and procedures invoked when a department or program appeals the General Education Assessment Committee's request for revisions to an Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) submission.

BACKGROUND

The General Education Committee (GEC) is a standing committee of Faculty Senate that is charged, in part, with "conducting a systematic review of the General Education Program by examining existing courses on a regular, rotating basis, and recommending curricular changes." GEC is therefore empowered to construct policies and establish procedures for conducting systematic reviews. The General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC), by contrast, is authorized to execute the assessment program that GEC has established. GEAC is not authorized to make policy regarding the General Education program. For this reason, any appeal of GEAC's request for revisions to the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) will be made to GEC.

PROCEDURES

When GEAC acts to request revisions for an Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) submission, the submitting department or program should seek to resolve the concerns raised by GEAC and resubmit an entry that sufficiently addresses those concerns. If interaction between the department and GEAC fails to lead to an agreeable resolution, the submitting department or program may appeal GEAC's request for additional revisions to GEC. An appeal to GEC involves the following steps:

1. The appellant notifies the chairs of both GEC and GEAC of the appeal. The appellant must submit a written response to the GEAC request for revisions that describes the basis for the appeal. The written response is expected to directly address the concerns raised by GEAC in their request for revisions and to clarify those points that prevented resolution during interaction that took place subsequent to GEAC's request for revisions.
2. The chair of GEC arranges for a hearing of the appeal to be added to the agenda of a regular GEC meeting.
 - a. The appellant has the right to send representatives to the GEC hearing in order to represent the appellant's position.
 - b. GEAC has the right to
 - i. Submit a written response to the appeal that gives the basis for the request for revisions. The response is expected to directly address the concerns raised by GEAC in their request and to clarify those points that prevented resolution during interaction that took place subsequent to GEAC's request for revisions.
 - ii. Send representatives to the GEC hearing in order to represent GEAC's position.
3. When GEC hears the appeal, the standing motion is made "to support the appeal." In other words, the standing motion is to override the request for Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) revisions. Since the appeal is specifically related to the GEAC action to request revisions, GEC will entertain no other motion with respect

to the appeal. The appeal cannot be divided nor can aspects of an Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) be acted on separately from the whole.

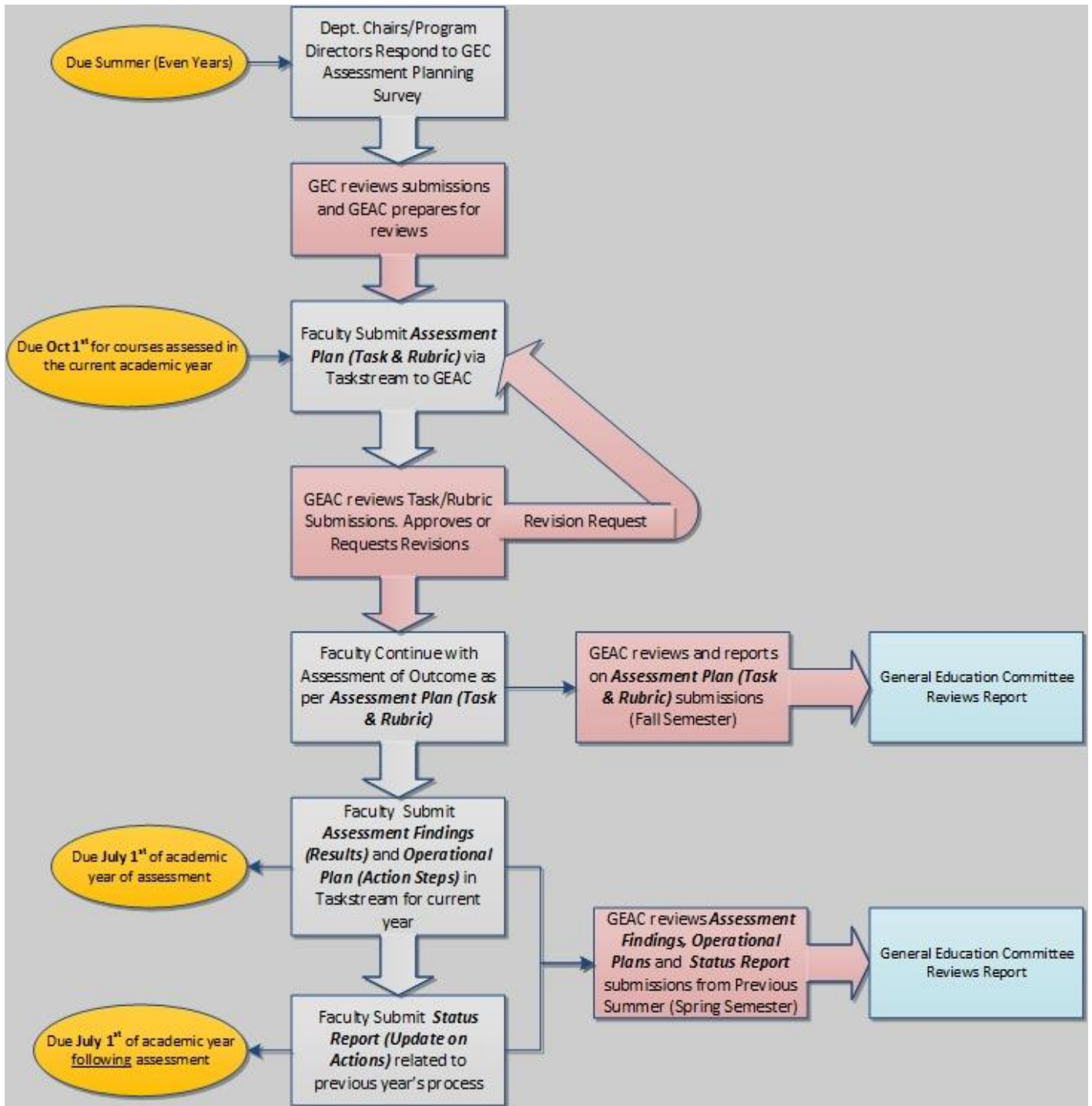
4. There are only two possible outcomes

a. The motion “to support the appeal” is approved. In this case, the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) is approved for use in the assessment of the general education program as submitted.

b. The motion “to support the appeal” fails. In this case, the appellant must revise the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric), addressing the concerns identified in the GEAC request for revisions.

5. As with any action of a standing committee, the action of GEAC to request revisions may be taken to Faculty Senate. It is unlikely that Senate will entertain any such appeal that has not first gone through the appeals process described in this document.

APPENDIX D: Assessment Process Flowchart



Appendix E: GEAC Review Procedures for Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric)

BACKGROUND

The GEAC committee will review and either approve or request revisions to the assessment tools submitted on the Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) before the assessment task is administered. The purpose of this review is to help ensure that the proposed assessment tools meet the criteria described below.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Each Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) is initially reviewed by two GEAC members. The reviewers are randomly chosen from GEAC and, if possible, no reviewers will be a member of the department that submitted the form under review. The submission is reviewed based on the following criteria:

- 1) The course-specific SLO clearly aligns with one of the six General Education SLOs.
- 2) The assessment task must
 - a) Assess the criteria of the SLO
 - b) Be clearly written and understandable
- 3) The assessment rubric must
 - a) Be aligned with the assessment task
 - b) Ensure a consistent interpretation by multiple evaluators
 - c) Demonstrate that the same criteria are assessed at every performance category
 - d) Not have gaps that make it difficult to classify some students into a performance category
 - e) Have performance categories that are well-defined or include distinct criteria
 - f) Evaluate individual student performance
- 4) Previous years' comments from GEAC reviews have been addressed if the same SLO or task is used.

Submitters are encouraged to include any explanation needed for an interdisciplinary audience to understand the course-specific SLO, assessment task, or rubric.

Each of the reviewers must either accept or request revisions to the form. If a submission requires revision, the reviewers will identify those concerns that require revision. The possible outcomes of this initial review are that:

- Both reviewers request revision. In this case, GEAC requests revision to the submission and notice is sent to the submitter along with reviewers' comments.
- Both reviewers accept. In this case, GEAC accepts the submission and notice is sent to the submitter along with reviewers' comments.
- One reviewer accepts and one reviewer requests revision. In this case, the submission is then reviewed by all other GEAC members. The majority action is determined and notice is sent to the submitter, along with reviewers' comments.

If the GEAC requests revisions for a submission, the department must address all of the concerns raised in the review and resubmit a modified Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric), which will undergo the review cycle anew. The same two reviewers will evaluate the resubmission. A department or program may alternately decide to appeal the GEAC ruling to GEC. The procedure for this is outlined in Appendix C of the Policies and Procedures for General Education Assessment available on the General Education Assessment website.

GEAC attempts to review each Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric) within two weeks of submittal.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- Assessment tool: There are only two tools defined in this process: the assessment rubric and the assessment task.
- Assessment rubric: Well-defined criteria for a student's performance on an assessment task into one of the five standardized categories. The rubric must associate all possible outcomes with one of the five categories in such a way that multiple evaluators would produce the same classification.
- Assessment task: Well defined activity that demonstrates a student's level of achievement in one of the SLOs.
- Assessment Plan (Task & Rubric): This documents the assessment tools and SLO for each general education course.
- GEAC: General Education Assessment Committee
- GEC: General Education Committee
- Performance category: Each student assessed will be assigned to one performance category. There are five performance categories for the purpose of general education assessment:
 - o Exemplary
 - o Proficient/ More than satisfactory
 - o Competent/Satisfactory
 - o Underdeveloped/ Less than satisfactory
 - o Unsatisfactory
- SLO: Student Learning Outcome