General Education

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND CONTENT
ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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A. Program Structure / Content
9.3: General education requirements [CR]

The institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the undergraduate level that:

(a) Is based on a coherent rationale.

(b) Is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree program.

- For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent.

(c) Ensures breadth of knowledge.

- These credit hours include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics.

- These courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession.
9.3: Key Compliance Components

**Rationale**
- Coherent

**Level**
- Post-secondary

**Curricular Weight**
- Substantial component
  - Minimum # of hours

**Course Distribution**
- 3 subject areas
- Non-specific to a profession/occupation
Common Non-Compliance Factors

- Treating “skills” courses as *pure humanities general education courses*
  - Not including at least one *pure humanities* course
  - Course options for students do not ensure that a student takes a course in each of the required areas

Courses in **basic composition** that do not contain a literature component, courses in **oral communication**, and **introductory foreign language** courses are skill courses and not pure humanities courses. Therefore, for purposes of meeting this standard, none of the above may be the **one course** designated to fulfill the humanities/fine arts requirement. (SACSCOC Executive Council interpretation, February 2010)

- Note that this does not preclude these courses from being part of the general education program beyond the required courses in the three areas prescribed
Evaluators’ Challenges

- Evaluation of “coherence” of the general education rationale (i.e., evaluating the criteria for course inclusion)
- Failure to address all key compliance components embedded in the requirement in the committee report narrative
B. STUDENT OUTCOMES
8.2. The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:

b. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.

(Student outcomes: general education)
8.2: Key Compliance Components

1. Identify Expected Outcomes

2. Assess Achievement of Outcomes

3. Use Findings for Improvement

Identify appropriate ways to measure these outcomes

Analyze what the results mean

Repeat
Most Common General Education Assessments

- Course-embedded assessments
  - Exam questions
  - Pre-/post-assessments
- Locally-developed, stand-alone tests
- Standardized tests
  - ETS Proficiency Profile assessment
  - CLA+
  - Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)
  - ATI Critical Thinking Assessment
  - ETS HEIghten
  - Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS)
Most Common General Education Assessments

- Locally-developed, stand-alone rubrics
- Standardized rubrics
  - AAC&U’s VALUE rubrics
  - Pathways of Writing Rubric (PoWR Rubric)
  - Rubric for Oral Communication (ROC Rubric)
  - Rubric of Critical Thinking (RoCKeT Rubric)
  - Intercultural Understanding Rubric (Intercultural Understanding Rubric)
Most Common General Education Assessments

- Locally developed surveys
- Standardized surveys/inventories
  - HERI’s freshman (CIRP) and senior (CSS) surveys
  - National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
  - Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)
  - Spiritual Transformation Inventory (STI)
- Other
  - Focus groups
Common Non-Compliance Factors

- Absence of a **description/overview of the institution’s assessment process** provided either
  - in the narrative (with sample artifacts from the assessment process as a good practice, but not a requirement), or
  - in supporting evidence (i.e., detailed assessment reports that document the process)

- **Use of sampling**
  - Sampling does not apply due to limited number of competencies
  - However, it is acceptable for a subset of competencies to be assessed in any given year
Common Non-Compliance Factors

- **Course-embedded assessments** do not include either
  - a mechanism for aggregation of course-level data, or
  - the infrastructure for general education embedded assessments (i.e., oversight by an institutional general education committee/faculty group, curriculum mapping of outcomes to courses, etc.)

- **NOTE:** May not rise to the level of non-compliance if this is the sole concern of the committee
Common Non-Compliance Factors

- Concerns about **general appropriateness/face validity of assessment**
  - Outcomes, assessments, and results are **not aligned** (i.e., outcome stated in percentage, but results reported as averages; outcome is about student learning, but results collected describe instructor behavior)
  - **KEY QUESTION:** Do the assessment methods yield some type of actionable data and are they aligned with the institution’s stated outcomes?
- Over-reliance on **vague improvements** plans (i.e., faculty will “continue to refine” courses, or “continue to monitor” because no improvement is needed because benchmark has been met)
Evaluators’ Challenges

- IE systems and processes are multifaceted and complex
- Must integrate micro level observations and analyses with macro level (holistic) evaluation and judgment of compliance with the standard
- Institutional reports and supporting documentation vary in format and presentation (even within a single institution)
- IE/assessment is a relatively young, still evolving, field of practice and research
Questions?