



## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN GENERAL EDUCATION

### SUMMARY REPORT

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Name of Institution: SUNY at New Paltz Academic Year: Spring 2018

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#### I. GE Categories Assessed in Spring 2018

Basic Communication-Oral, American History, and Other World Civilizations are the general education (GE) knowledge and skills areas that were assessed in spring 2018. Although we normally would also have assessed Critical Thinking (CT), we did not do so because of a faculty decision to include CT within majors at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels—as an alternative to integrating it within GE content areas as we currently do.

Instead of assessing CT, during the spring, using the SUNY Board of Trustees' student learning outcomes (SLOs) for CT, faculty identified courses containing CT at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels that their majors will be required to take. (This exercise was also completed for Information Management—IM—because faculty also voted to integrate IM progressively within majors.) Departments were given sample rubrics, developed by the GE Board, to assist their curriculum planning and assessment activities. Departments were also asked to review, discuss, and adopt research-based strategies for teaching CT progressively across the curriculum.

#### II. Spring 2018 Assessment Process

The new GE assessment cycle began with a memo from the Associate Provost for Strategic Planning and Assessment to the campus, in fall 2017, informing faculty about the GE content and competency categories that would be assessed in spring 2018. In addition, the GE Board facilitated discussions about GE and assessment, in fall 2017, and held a GE Forum in April 2018. GE Board members also assisted individual faculty to prepare for the assessments and faculty were provided information about where to locate GE-related campus resources. Information regarding the importance of using the assessment

information, how assessment results have been used in previous rounds of assessment, and where and how to report GE course assessment information was also circulated to faculty.

It is expected that faculty will have an assessment plan for each GE course and they were presented two ways to meet this requirement. They could use or modify a plan for the course that the GE Board had already vetted and approved or they could develop a plan and submit it to GE Board for review and approval. Most faculty chose to use or modify a pre-approved plan. Faculty then taught and assessed their GE course. All, except one, faculty met the requirement to submit their course assessment results in a campus-developed online database. Six faculty did not meet the stipulated deadline and were sent email reminders.

Institutional Research (IR) aggregated the GE assessment information into campus-wide, school, and departmental files and sent these to the associate provost who wrote this campus summary report. In keeping with past practice, we will send schools and departments this report, the overall campus report, the school level report, and departmental reports. These will be accompanied by a cover memo urging departmental review, discussion, and use of the assessment information. In fall 2018, as is customarily done, departments will submit a written report of how they used the assessment results to their associate deans. The associate deans will send a summary of those reports to the associate provost for action at the school and institutional levels, as justified.

### III. Major findings for the Spring 2018 GE Assessments:

Findings are presented and discussed below.

#### Basic Communication-Oral

Category	N- Assessed	%- Assessed	N- Exceeds	%- Exceeds	N- Meets	%- Meets	N- Approach	%- Approach	N-Not Meeting	%-Not Meeting
<b>Basic Communication-Oral</b>										
Students will develop proficiency in oral discourse.	190	96%	70	37%	99	52%	20	11%	1	1%
Students will evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.	177	90%	45	25%	66	37%	54	31%	12	7%

Number of courses sampled/Number of courses evaluated: 10/10

Basic Communication-Oral has two student learning outcomes (SLOs). Results for SLO one reveal 89% (with 37% of the students exceeding and 52% meeting) of the students have acquired competence in oral discourse. Results for SLO two indicate 62% of the students are exceeding (25%) or meeting (37%) the standards and 38% are not meeting (31% approaching and 7% not meeting) the standards for this SLO. Overall, a substantial number of students are proficient in these SLOs; however, a number of students need to become more skilled in using established criteria to evaluate oral presentations and to gain proficiency in oral discourse.

**American History**

Category	N- Assessed	%- Assessed	N- Exceeds	%- Exceeds	N- Meets	%- Meets	N- Approach	%- Approach	N-Not Meeting	%-Not Meeting
<b>American History</b>										
Students will demonstrate knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social, and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society.	208	90%	81	39%	81	39%	27	13%	19	9%
Students will demonstrate knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.	208	90%	71	34%	90	43%	35	17%	12	6%
Students will demonstrate understanding of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.	208	90%	72	35%	81	39%	31	15%	24	12%

Number of courses sampled/Number of courses evaluated: 7/7

American History has three SLOs. Results for SLO one indicate 78% of the students have a basic knowledge of the political, economic, social, and cultural history of America, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society. Similarly, results for SLO two show a substantial number of students (77%) know about American corporate institutions and their effects on different groups. Results for SLO three show 74% of the students as having an understanding of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world. Taken as a whole, the results indicate that a large number of students have substantial knowledge of American History. However, more than one-fifth (22%, 23%, and 27% for objectives one, two, and three, respectively) have not mastered these SLOs.

## Other World Civilizations

Category	N- Assessed	%- Assessed	N- Exceeds	%- Exceeds	N- Meets	%- Meets	N- Approach	%- Approach	N-Not Meeting	%-Not Meeting
<b>Other World Civilizations</b>										
Students will demonstrate knowledge of either a broad outline of world history, or	68	48%	19	28%	30	44%	13	19%	6	9%
Students will demonstrate knowledge of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of one non-Western civilization.	132	92%	34	26%	72	55%	16	12%	10	8%

Number of courses sampled/Number of courses evaluated: 8/7

Other World Civilizations has two SLOs. Findings reveal 72% of the students are exceeding (28%) or meeting (44%) SLO one and 81% are exceeding (26%) or meeting (55%) SLO two. These findings imply that students are able to demonstrate a general knowledge of world history as well as of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of a non-Western civilization. Although these findings are positive, it should be noted that 28% of students are not meeting SLO one (19% approaching and 9% not meeting) and 20% are not meeting SLO two (12% approaching and 8% not meeting), which should be addressed.

Findings for the Other World Civilizations content area also reveal 48% of the students completed assessments for SLO one and 92% completed them for SLO two. This discrepancy in the number of students who participated in SLO one versus SLO two is explained by the fact that, given a choice, more faculty chose to assess SLO two instead of SLO one.

## IV. Faculty Comments

Examples of changes faculty say they plan to make when they teach their course again are presented in this section. Also described in this section are lessons faculty say they learned in teaching and assessing their courses, and faculty perceptions about the GE assessment process at New Paltz.

### Basic Communication-Oral

#### A. What changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?

- Spend more time teaching presentation skills
- Record (with appropriate permission) presentations and have students critique them
- Devote more time to teaching students how to critique/evaluate presentations

- Discuss the rubric in greater depth

**B. What have you learned that could be helpful to others as they assess GE?**

- Reserve time for set-up between presentations
- Give students opportunities to boost their confidence with “low-stakes” presentations
- Give students sufficient time to analyze TED talks

**C. What suggestions or feedback do you have about the assessment process at New Paltz?**

- Change the course enrollment in the database, if needed
- Engage in assessment because this contributes to positive course outcomes and student experience
- Set aside sufficient time for assessment as it takes time

### **American History**

**A. What changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?**

- Replace some of the articles with a textbook
- Give more writing assignments
- Discuss the “Digital Divide” and its impact on various forms of inequality

**B. What have you learned that could be helpful to others as they assess GE?**

- Add a final exam to the final paper
- Expand discussion of the impact of domestic policies on global affairs/foreign relations
- Help students improve their performance by spending more time addressing weak writing, poor organization, imprecise understanding of course material, and inadequate referencing

**C. What suggestions or feedback do you have about the assessment process at New Paltz?**

- Encourage faculty to conduct more complex assessments by modifying the assessment template
- Works well

### **Other World Civilizations**

**A. What changes might you make if you were to teach this course again?**

- Give pointed and early feedback
- Give small quizzes and informal assessments throughout the semester to get a more comprehensive profile of students’ performance

**B. What have you learned that could be helpful to others as they assess GE?**

- Collected information from this course showing the variance in students’ performance in seated and online course is negligible

- Connect assignments to SLOs
- Encourage students to begin their assignments early

**C. What suggestions or feedback do you have about the assessment process at New Paltz?**

- Use pre- and post-tests
- Remind faculty about the assessments during finals week and again between the end of finals week and the due date for submitting results
- Indicate in the assessment form window the maximum characters allowed
- Include a timeout counter in the assessment form window so information is not lost while filling out the form
- Create an assessment that allows comparison of student outcomes by different instructors

**V. Discussion**

These findings show a considerable number of students are mastering the SLOs for Basic Communication-Oral, American History, and Other World Civilizations and a small but notable number are not. Faculty ascribe students' lack of attainment of learning outcomes to such factors as inadequate student effort, skill deficit, and the need to modify courses and/or teaching. And most faculty say they plan to modify their courses based on the assessment findings. Acting on these assessment findings is a worthy goal and one that is in keeping with good teaching practice and institutional commitment.

Recommended actions on these assessment results include personal reflection on the meaning of results in terms of what is working well in the GE course(s) and what needs improvement. Time should be 'carved out' to have deep and meaningful conversations with colleagues about the GE courses assessed, students' performance, and instruction. Although finding time and space for these conversations often proves difficult, it is imperative that faculty continue to engage in these as part of the normal ebb and flow of their work. Conversations could be initiated by posing meaningful questions about the structure and content of GE courses, crafting assignments to align with learning outcomes, validity of the rubric(s), giving feedback to students, and teaching strategies that promote learning. Conversations may involve intra- and inter-departmental faculty. Opportunities to engage in conversations with colleagues in similar disciplines are provided by the Faculty Development Center and by the Fall GE Forum.


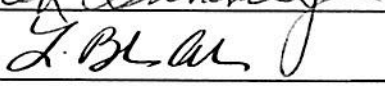
Conversations should be followed by concrete actions (e.g., designing new assignments or tweaking existing ones, revising courses, and fine-tuning rubrics). Changes should be monitored to see if they are producing the anticipated effect on students' performance. The impact of changes on students' performance may be small. However, over time, these incremental improvements add up.

It is hoped that the information on norming and using rubrics available [here](#) will be useful to faculty who are planning to revise their rubrics. When the same rubric is used across sections, it is recommended that faculty come together periodically to ensure they are applying the rubric in the same way. This is called norming. Norming seeks to calibrate the faculty so that when the rubric is used, assignments are scored consistently. The GE Forum, mentioned previously, is a place where faculty have engaged in norming rubrics and English Composition program faculty meet annually to engage in norming sessions.

These assessment results make clear that faculty devoted considerable time thinking about their teaching and how they can improve it and their courses so that students achieve better educational outcomes. Many participating faculty are planning to augment their courses with additional information. For example, a faculty member intends to infuse more information on the "Digital Divide" in the course because of "the way the digital divide intersect[s] with other form[s] of inequality." Content such as this, covered in GE, instill knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are vital for students' personal advancement and for heightening their awareness to cultural realities, etc.

#### VI. To Conclude

This report and attachments (i.e., overall campus results, school, and departmental results) will be shared with relevant individuals and groups (e.g., provost, chairs, GE Board, Curriculum Committee chair, associate deans, deans, and presiding officer of the faculty). Recipients are expected to examine the results, discuss them, and act upon them, as appropriate (see above section). Departments will document their discussions, actions taken, and outcomes of changes implemented. Chairs will submit assessment reports to their associate deans who will summarize them and send an overall report to the Associate Provost for Strategic Planning and Assessment for action, as necessitated.

Submitted by:  Date: 8/3/18  
Chief Academic Officer:  Date: August 3, 2018

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