

Draft Capstone Assessment Plan

Background

Those developing GER Capstone courses have always been asked to measure and gather evidence of student performance on the capstone outcomes. This evidence is to be used to (1) assess the effectiveness of the capstone course itself, and (2) to help assess the effectiveness of the GER program at UAA.

A GER working group over the summer of 2008 determined that the collection of evidence of student performance in GER Capstone courses is neither universal nor uniform. The variability of measurements used and evidence collected makes it difficult to confidently make any general statements regarding student performance on the capstone outcomes at the institutional level. From the evaluation of evidence provided by capstone instructors this past spring, it is clear that a single rubric is needed. Faculty teaching the capstone courses and the departments that host them could benefit from clearer directions and examples of assessment expectations and techniques.

Proposed Practices

In order to accomplish institutional evaluation of student performance in the general education areas the working group is proposing these practices:

1. Syllabi for all capstone courses will include the following statement to students:
As an integrative capstone to your general education experience, this course asks you to synthesize what you have learned from your general education courses. As an outcome of this course, you will be able to integrate knowledge by accessing, comparing, and judging knowledge gained from diverse fields and critically evaluate and apply your understanding of these fields and the human problems they address in the evolving realities of the 21st century. Evidence of your accomplishments, used anonymously, may be used to assess performance and to gauge the effectiveness of the General Education Requirements at UAA. To ensure anonymity, you may be asked to submit a second copy of one of your assignments with all identifiers removed.
2. Student performance on the GER outcomes will be assessed by the faculty member teaching the capstone course. The faculty will be provided with a Capstone Course Assessment Rubric to use in evaluating one or more signature assignments from a random sampling of roughly 15% of the class. This evaluation of the effectiveness of the GERs is necessarily separate from the assignment grade. These sample artifacts will then be submitted to a second faculty member in the department for a second assessment. The department chair will determine how to distribute the artifacts for this second reading.
3. Faculty teaching capstone courses will also survey the class using the Capstone Student Survey to learn student perceptions of
 - their ability to perform in each outcome
 - the effectiveness of the GER program in helping them to develop their general education abilities.
 - the effectiveness of their entire educational experience at UAA (GER, Major and Co-curricular) in helping them to develop their general education abilities.
4. Faculty teaching the capstone course will complete the Capstone Faculty Survey evaluating the preparedness and performance of students in meeting the GER Capstone outcomes.
5. Faculty participating in capstone assessment will meet as a group to discuss their perceptions of assessment results and, where warranted, recommend changes to assessment program and/or process or to the GER program itself.
6. The Office of Academic Affairs will compile the results from the three assessment measures and report the results, together with recommendations and feedback from the capstone faculty discussion group, and to the Academic Boards of the Faculty Senate. Analysis resulting from data gathered could lead to further recommendations and actions.

The university will be tasked with founding and supporting coordination activities that occur within the departments and colleges.