

GER ACTION PLAN: CLOSING THE LOOP – A PILOT PROGRAM

I. The facts/reality:

NOTE: From AY 15-16 to present, UAA began comprehensive work assessing the efficacy of the GER offerings University-wide through a faculty driven GER Task Force. Thus, the following narrative cites, draws from and builds upon the AY2019, the AY2021, and the AY2022 GER Assessment Findings Reports.

1. Significant work has been done since AY2016 on GER student learning outcomes (SLOs) using and implementing:
 - a. A goal of developing an outcomes-focused shared assessment model indicating the SLOs all students should emerge with as a result of the GER courses taught at UAA.
 - b. Essential learning outcomes as defined by the AAC&U and Liberal Education America's Promise (LEAP) initiative that were adopted by the Faculty Senate in 2000. These essential learning outcomes formed the backbone of the UAA GER assessment process.
 - c. Workshops and training/brainstorming sessions with faculty across colleges.
 - d. Assessment of student work from across the curriculum and levels designed to gain a snapshot into student achievement (ongoing process).
2. From that work to date, inclusive of the ongoing assessment work each year, 3 tiers (Basic Skills, Disciplinary Knowledge and Integrative Capstone), 7 Categories (Written Communication, Oral Communication, Quantitative Skills, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, Fine Arts and Integrative Capstone), and 9 outcomes (Communicate effectively, Reason mathematically, Relate knowledge to historical context, Interpret different systems of aesthetic representation, Investigate the complexity of human institutions and behavior, Identify the ways in which science has advanced understanding, Locate and use relevant information, Adopt critical perspectives, Integrate knowledge). SLO's for Social Sciences, Humanities, and Fine Arts, and SLO's for Natural Sciences, Quantitative Skills, and Knowledge Integration have been developed and refinements and innovative additions have been identified. Indicators have been established for each category in the assessment process (e.g. for Written Communication - responds, demonstrates, develops, and controls) (see [GER indicators across the curriculum](#) and the [AY2021 report](#)).
3. Information Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion, and Alaska Native Studies are understood to be taught throughout the curriculum or in specified courses as they do not have their own dedicated set of courses. Therefore, thus all three are assessed in a number of courses across the curriculum.
4. It is inherent that the successful acquisition of cumulative GER Student Learning Outcomes skills (SLOs) is a step-up/scaffold approach. In other words, attention is given to what a student should be able to achieve inside of each GER 100-400 level.
5. The assessment process is designed to attend to the general dimension of GER outcomes across the curriculum. The continuing goal of the GER committee is to assess the efficacy of GER offerings with an eye to rubrics and indicators in evaluating SLOs

across all UAA GERs despite the diversity of disciplines. The intent of such work is not designed to necessitate change in course content or how that content is taught. Rather, the goal is to stimulate creative imagination as to how and what is being taught can be tweaked and reimaged to meet the SLOs that all UAA students should emerge with at the end of their educational experience at UAA.

6. Each SLO has 4 *indicators* (e.g. respond, demonstrate etc.) and accompanying *descriptors* to define each level of mastery for each of the 4 indicators. [Written, oral, and info literacy have developed rubrics.](#)

This leads to the request of Provost Runge to now begin the process to “Close the Loop.”

II. Action: “Closing the Loop.”

Goals:

1. Determine a way to summarize the GER data and present it across different venues to various faculty to receive feedback and to conceive a plan to make the data and findings actionable.
2. Examine what kinds of decisions the GER Assessment Group is making and what kinds of mechanisms can be implemented. Is our GER mechanism and process effective? Is there something that should be changed?
3. Process the themes that are apparent in the GER reports to date to help drive questions. For example, the discrepancy between 200 and 300, even into 400 levels raise questions as to why? For the AY2021 assessment, 100 level students in Written Communication indicated proficient skills while the 200 level indicated a downward shift but rose again at the 300 level. 100, 200 *and* 300 level students in Information Literacy stayed flat and indicated developing skills while rose to at or near proficient at the 400 level. Perhaps, suggests the AY2021 report, there needs to be a level of mastery assigned for the 400 level in Information Literacy. Another theme that is emerging revolves around the definition of Information literacy itself. There is a wide variety of information that professors call for, but may not require formal documentation (e.g. reflection upon personal experience or on a common set of classroom readings).
4. Pose a set of questions to be asked during the pilot program. The following are those currently developed.
 - a. Does our data across the GER levels match the data across departmental levels?
 - b. Are we asking the right questions for our data? Are there other mediums of consideration for evaluation (e.g. ePortfolios, alternative reading and oral/visual communication competency such as seen in creative writing, music, theatre, dance and art?)
 - c. Are the SLOs being developed across the curriculum?
 - d. Can faculty assess the integrated capstone in a way that is summative of the student’s experience in their major?
 - e. Does the current GER working group data match what departments see in their data?

- f. Does the GER working group data and do the GER working group rubrics and indicators meet departmental needs?
- g. What is already in place by the GER process that is currently working and that could be tweaked to get it better (feedback loops, more research, conference participation by key members of the GER working group)?
- h. While there SEEMS to be a clear difference between 100 and 300 levels, what are the differences between 200 and 300 and 300 and 400 levels?

It is important that the GER assessment mechanism and process is viewed as a facilitator of innovation rather than as a restrictive box.

III. Pilot Study

1. Jill Flanders Crosby will meet at the macro and micro levels to synthesize the GER Assessment mechanism and process to date as outlined above and ask the questions below to receive feedback:
 - a. CAS Chairs and Dean meeting – CAS is a large generator of GERs.
 - b. CTC College-wide meeting -CTC is the next large generator.
 - c. Mat-Su campus Faculty Forum or the assessment committee.
 - d. Anthropology – already receptive to the GER work and has been working inter-departmentally for a couple of years.
 - e. Department of Music – takes this pilot study into the Fine Arts.
 - f. One more micro level recommendation outside of CAS?

From the pilot program, feedback will be gathered and rolled into the final GER Assessment working group report as an addendum to the working group findings. The report will be presented to GEC at the end of the semester with recommendations designed to disseminate findings and GER information widely across the UAA community for consideration and action. It is assumed that further options and recommendations will be internally discussed within GEC. It will be the role of the GEC to make final recommendations and take specific actions as desired or deemed appropriate.

The initial proposed actions and recommendations below (likely to modify during the pilot study roll out) include but are not limited to:

1. Present the findings in as many venues as possible i.e., CAFE; the semester teaching academies held for faculty; special college-wide forums. Engage in collaborative discussion for further ways to make the GER findings actionable.
2. As forums are often sparsely attended, an important recommendation is to distribute the findings from GEC to all college-wide curriculum committees to inform all new and revised curriculum passing through these committees.
3. Present the findings college-wide to Deans and Directors.
4. Based on the findings and suggestions, GEC considers developing a GER policy document that moves up to UAB for discussion, approval and implementation.

Of further consideration are the steps as outlined in the AY2021 GER Annual Assessment Report:

1. Workshops using the assessment results for assignment creation, course design, curriculum planning.
2. Addition of appropriate GenEd outcomes to relevant syllabi across campus.
3. Additional faculty discussion concerning “vertical alignment” of GenEd and program/major SLOs from the 100- to 400-level.
4. Additional faculty discussion concerning “horizontal alignment” of GenEd courses to create some consistency in across Tier 1 and Tier 2 courses.
5. Additional faculty discussion concerning the revision of the Tier 3 Integrative Capstone to better meet institutional accreditation and GenEd programmatic needs.