

Minutes

General Education Requirements Committee

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

2:30-4:30 p.m.

GERC's website: www.isu.edu/gerc

Attendance: Jim Skidmore, Edward Kammerer, Joanne Tokle, Beverly Ray, Kimberly Miller, Anna Grinath, Kirsten Bernabee, Tayo Omotowa, Jonathan Gaddy, Elizabeth Quick,
Ex-officio: Shu-Yuan Lin, Karen Appleby, Hala Abou Arraj, Sacha Johnson, Karen Fullmer, Ben Bolin (UCC), Catherine Read
Excused: Kara Kener

1. Announcements:

Welcome to the new COSE member **Kirsten Bernabee** and COH member **Jonathan Gaddy**.

2. Council approved the **Minutes** for [September 26, 2023](#).

3. Updates and Information:

a. Executive Committee update – Joanne Tokle

Reminder that **Objectives 3 and 4** are due for Objective Review this January so departments should start working on their Five-Year Reports for all courses within those Objectives.

b. Academic Affairs update – Karen Appleby

Karen will be attending the annual Statewide General Education Summit this Thursday and will share the highlights with GERC when she returns. The Summit's focus will be on embedding durable skills into the Objectives and best ways to promote the benefits of general education. The ISU discipline group reps will also meet with GERC at their October 24 meeting to report back their groups' discussion highlights.

c. UCC update – Ben Bolin

Will not meet this week. Proposals are starting to come in so the pace will pick up shortly.

d. Update from Registrar on proposed revisions to [SBOE Policy III.N. Statewide General Education](#)

Hala reported that the Registrars met last week, and they asked Heidi Estrem from the Office of the State Board (OSBE) for clarifications. The policy change is intended to give universities more flexibility in counting gen ed credits as students transfer in from community colleges to specific degree programs at four-year institutions. An example of the proposed Specialized Associate's degree would be an Associate of Engineering (AE) degree, not an AA, nor AS, nor AAS degree. These situations will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Hala answered members' questions. The second reading of this policy change is on next week's SBOE agenda for consideration.

4. Unfinished Business:

a. Review team for the next phase of the [Gen Ed Program Review](#).

Proposed [Program External Review Committee Responsibilities](#)

Review Team:

Internal ISU faculty reviewer: Dr. Susan Belliston, Nursing

External reviewer: Dr. Martin L. Gibbs, Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences, LCSC

Student Affairs reviewer: Felice Otero, Associate Dean of Students

ACTION: Members will continue adding their suggestions, edits, and comments to the list of responsibilities.

- b Proposed ISU Excellence in General Education Teaching Award.

For GERC's consideration and suggestions:

DRAFT: ISU Excellence in General Education Teaching Award Nomination -

ACTION: Karen Appleby will draft more specific protocol for nominations for the next meeting, including a streamlined application materials process.

- c **Objective 1 ORC Report:** Jim Skidmore

ACTION: Motion to **accept** the Objective Review Committee (ORC) Report for Objective #1, and GERC will revisit the assessment process in a future meeting. Motion **passed**. ([Appendix A](#))

5. Assessment Plans – ready for GERC's review

- a. **Obj 5 2022 PHYS 1113 Gen Ed Assessment Plan** -

ACTION: Motion to approve the PHYS 1113 Assessment Plan. Motion **passed**.

- b. **Obj 6 PSYC 1101 Assessment Plan - 2nd Cycle FY2022** - revisions to be considered by GERC.

ACTION: The Chair will contact the Proposal Originator, Dr. Shannon Lynch, for clarification on two points and GERC will reconsider the plan at the next meeting.

- c. **Obj 3 2022 EDMT 2271 General Education Assessment Plan**

ACTION: Motion to **approve** the EDMT 2271 Assessment Plan. Motion **passed**.

Assessment Plans for discussion when ready:

- d. **Obj 8 FIN 1115 Assessment Plan** – remanded for revisions

- e. **PHIL 2260 Assessment Plan** – GERC has **approved the course** for Objective 7; **Plan** still awaiting revisions

Physics submitted the Plan for PHYS 1113 (listed above) for GERC's consideration to use as a template for the rest once it is approved.

- f. **Revised Physics Assessment Plans folder**

[PHYS 1100 Assessment Plan](#)

[PHYS 1101 Assessment Plan](#)

[PHYS 1101L Assessment Plan](#)

[PHYS 1111 Assessment Plan](#)

[PHYS 1112 Assessment Plan](#)

[PHYS 1114 Assessment Plan](#)

[PHYS 1152 Assessment Plan](#)

[PHYS 1153 Assessment Plan](#)

6. Future Business -

- a. Discipline group members are scheduled to meet with GERC again on October 24 after the State Gen Ed Summit scheduled for mid-October.
- b. New Assessment Plan Template with revised questions – for GERC’s consideration and approval after review of pilot plans this fall.
[Assessment plan questions annotated - April 2023](#)
[Assessment plan questions - revised April 2023](#)
- c. [Transferable Skills Project](#) - for October 24 meeting:
Darren Blagburn’s presentation and recommendations from last Spring. Since Darren has now left ISU, GERC and Academic Affairs should consider whether to continue this project into the future, or let it stop here.

8. Adjourn: 4:02 p.m.

Approved by GERC: October 24, 2023
Accepted by UCC: October 26, 2023
Accepted by Faculty Senate: November 6, 2023
Accepted by Academic Affairs: October 31, 2023

APPENDICES

Assessment Plans Approved

1. [Obj 5 2022 PHYS 1113 Gen Ed Assessment Plan](#)
2. [Obj 3 2022 EDMT 2271 General Education Assessment Plan](#)

Other Documents Accepted:

A. Objective Review Committee Report

Objective 1, Written Communication, Spring 2023

Objective Review Committee Membership: Jim Skidmore, Shannon Kobs Nawotniak, Margaret Johnson

- A. **Evaluate the assessment plan for each course, together with its implementation. Provide a brief summary of the Committee’s findings in this area. Describe any recommended changes.**

There are approved plans for ENGL 1102 and HONS 1101, and the committee sees no problem with these plans. The implementation of the plan for ENGL 1102 has been consistent, with methods modified over time. As the 5-year report from English states, “This past five-year period has been primarily a period of finding the best assessment instruments, the best rubric, and best processes for assessment.” At the time of the last Objective 1 Review in 2018, implementation of the HONS 1101 plan had not yet begun. Significant progress has now been made, and several annual reviews have been conducted. The 5-year report from Honors outlines some gaps that have occurred in the annual assessment of learning outcomes, and it notes that these can be fixed in the future with better communication during “handoffs” of assessment responsibility. The committee does not have any significant concerns or recommendations regarding ongoing assessment for courses in this objective.

B. Evaluate the assessment *outcome* for each course. To what extent are students in each course satisfactorily achieving the learning outcomes for the objective? Provide a brief summary of the Committee’s findings in this area. Describe any recommended changes.

Annual assessment for both HONS 1101 and ENGL 1102 have consistently demonstrated that most students are satisfactorily achieving the learning outcomes in these courses. Results for HONS 1101 have typically ranged from 70-80%. The data for ENGL 1102 is more complicated in recent years due to experimentation with different methods of assessment. As the English 5-year report indicates, in some years only indirect assessment tools were used, including student surveys; and these resulted in unusually low percentages of students deemed to have satisfactorily achieved the outcome. It’s quite clear that this inconsistency in the data is an artifact of the changing review methods, rather than any changes in the courses themselves or in student learning. English has now implemented a “capstone” assignment for ENGL 1102, and it expects that this assignment will allow for a more accurate assessment of student achievement of the learning outcomes. The review committee does not recommend to the programs any changes in this area beyond those that have already been proposed by the programs themselves.

The committee does, however, have recommendations to the General Education Requirements Committee regarding the current annual assessment procedures and expectations. We find that there are features of the current process that increase the burden of assessment on programs without any clear benefit. This leads to frustration among faculty and a tendency not to take the process seriously. These features include: 1. The emphasis on conducting a review of direct assessment tools—i.e., the work of a large numbers of students—*every year*, rather than on a less frequent interval such as every other year; and 2. A tendency to dismiss or discount any role for *instructor reflection* in assessing student achievement of learning outcomes.

It is likely that direct assessment of student work, with the use of a rubric, is favored over instructor reflection because the former produces *numbers* (percentages) whereas the latter does not. These numbers can have the appearance of objectivity, whereas instructor reflection can seem merely subjective. But it is very important to acknowledge the apparent objectivity of the numbers produced by the rubrics is mostly *illusory*.

For this reason, the committee recommends that programs be accorded more flexibility in how they conduct annual assessment. Programs can then use this flexibility to design assessment methods that remain thoughtful and instructive while minimizing the burdens placed on faculty.

- C. Evaluate the list of courses currently approved to satisfy the objective. To what extent does the current list contribute to a strong, coherent system of general education. Would a reduction or increase in the number or variety of courses in this objective strengthen the overall system? Provide a brief summary of the Committee's findings. Describe any recommended changes.**

It is clear to the committee that the first-year writing sequence (ENGL 1101/1102) is crucial to a system of general education that is academically strong. It also sees HONS 1101 as an appropriate alternative for students in the Honors program. These courses must remain at the core of Objective 1. In light of this objective's focus on fundamental writing skills, it is not clear that a wider variety of courses would be helpful. We do not recommend changes in this area.

- D. Evaluate the stated learning outcomes of this general education objective. Are there any problems with the learning outcomes as currently described, or ways in which they might be improved? Provide a brief summary of the Committee's findings in this area. Describe any recommended changes.**

The committee does not see a need for alteration in the current learning outcomes for Objective 1. The English 5-year report notes that its faculty have representation on the statewide disciplinary group for Objective 1, and it has directed any occasional concerns through those representatives.

- E. Evaluate the objective itself and its place within the system of general education. To what extent does the objective, in its current form, contribute to a strong overall system of general education? Are there ways in which the objective could be modified to improve it? Could the system be improved with its elimination or replacement? Provide a brief summary of the Committee's findings in this area. Describe any recommended changes.**

The committee does not have changes to recommend in this area. As mentioned above, it is very clear that Objective 1 is a crucial component of the general education system. The current 2-course sequence is in line with national best practices and should not be altered.

Accepted by GERC: October 10, 2023, with a note that GERC will revisit the assessment process in a future meeting.