

Objective Review Report: Objective 7 Spring 2021

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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.

CS/INFO 1181 (Computer Science and Programming I)

The assessment plan for CS 1181 consists of assessing two (out of six) of the Objective 7 outcomes each year (one at the end of Fall semester and one at the end of Spring semester). In this manner, all six outcomes are evaluated every 3 years. To assess an outcome, a single, specific question is added to the final exam that is administered to all students across all sections of the CS 1181 course. A randomly selected subsample of student responses to the Objective 7 outcome question is evaluated each semester. Both the average rating for each outcome and the percent of all assessed students having adequate or higher ratings in each of the assessed outcomes is recorded. Evaluation and interpretation of the results is performed by a departmental program general education assessment committee. Each fall, this committee reviews the above instruments, syllabi, and any additional information available to determine whether the course is achieving the targeted learning outcomes. It reports to the program faculty identifying 1) where excellence is being achieved, 2) where weaknesses are identified that require specific foci in curriculum design and delivery, and 3) any necessary recommended changes to the assessment process itself. The plan appears appropriate but has not been consistently implemented because of major changes in personnel and college housing the department. The committee only recommends focusing on stability and continuity in following the assessment plan.

POLS 2202 (Introduction to Politics and Critical thinking)

The assessment plan for POLS 2202 consists of a survey being sent to faculty members teaching the course each semester. In addition, the assessment coordinator for the general education objective collects and evaluates syllabi, assignments, and exams. This culminates in a semester report for POLS 2202. The major emphasis of the plan has been to ensure that faculty are using the Objective 7 outcomes in their syllabi and in course design. As implemented the plan is working in improving consistency between POLS 2202 courses. What inconsistency does exist within the POLS 2202 course occurs in ECP courses. In August 2020, the Department of Political Science distributed ECP faculty liaisons among all faculty in the department. In a faculty meeting in August 2020, it was emphasized that POLS 2202 must meet the Objective 7 outcomes

and liaisons are working individually with ECP instructors to ensure better consistency between courses in meeting these learning outcomes. The assessment plan was instrumental in the redistribution of liaisons (previously one faculty member was the liaison for all ECP courses) and for faculty discussions on the core elements of an effective POLS 2202 course. A workshop with ECP instructors in May or June 2021 will emphasize the importance of meeting these outcomes. Recommended changes include regularly addressing the course standards with ECP instructors in both an annual workshop and in ECP instructor interactions with faculty liaisons. These changes should be reflected in the course's plan.

HIST (HIST1100: History in Film; HIST 1120: Special Topics in World History; HIST 1118: US History and Culture)

Each instructor for each section assigned activities to assess the predetermined competency each academic year, following the approved department plan. The department faculty evaluated student achievement on each of the competencies. Given the wide range of content covered in the department's various courses that satisfy Objective 7, we allow instructors to each build separate assessment tools based on the materials used in their class, each aimed at the shared competencies. Assigned questions asked students to provide analytical, written responses to questions about particular historical issues and events or questions analyzing specific historical primary and secondary sources studied in that class. These assignments should challenge students to demonstrate competence with concepts and tools such as causation, implication, perspective, context, argumentation/interpretation, and evidence (both primary and secondary). Some recommended changes: Regular (once every semester) uploading of 10 percent of student assignment samples from instructors, especially when adjuncts and ECP teachers teach these courses (they need reminding). We as a department are working on professional development events to ensure this is conveyed to them and followed through. Keep deadlines consistent - especially for ECP teachers so that they have clear deadlines within a semester to upload assignments allowing the assessments. Also, the department will regularly organize professional development sessions every academic year for ECP teachers to make sure the required assignment and assessment expectations are conveyed and adopted effectively in the ECP sections. We have made a list of common questions that we plan to use for OBJ7 courses to evaluate how well the students are meeting the learning objectives. However, we will be working towards making a "question bank" so that the same questions do not appear every year- making it a predictable question for students.

ANTH/ENGL/LANG 1107 (Nature of Language)

Assessment was conducted according to the Approved Gen Ed Assessment Plan for the years 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, where possible. Limited data was available for a retrospective assessment of GERC outcomes. Annual assessment report receipts and past course exams were used to complete the 5-year report. Two outcomes were assessed each year. For fall 2017, data was not sufficiently available to assess the outcomes. For fall 2020, a set of standardized exam questions were used for direct

assessment of measures and an indirect assessment instrument was developed to measure student perceptions of their achievement of each outcome. The exam questions were scored using a scale of ‘does not meet expectations’, ‘approaches expectations’, ‘meets expectations’, and ‘exceeds expectations’. These methods were chosen to enable consistent comparison of outcomes across years, objective assessment of student achievement of outcomes, and to enable both direct and indirect measures of the outcomes.

The Approved Assessment Plan for this course is overly complicated and relies on syllabi and other materials not directly measuring student learning outcomes. Suggested revisions include: 1) assessing all outcomes each year to provide meaningful longitudinal data. The department is discussing this but Dr. Redd Kickham is the only one who teaches this course in her department and is the one who suggested the revision (the approach is already underway), 2) using a standardized instrument consistent across assessment periods, and 3) limiting the direct assessment instrument to the final exam of the class, to include a specific set of questions/measures clearly aligned one per outcome.

THEA 1118/2251 (Oral Interpretation of Literature/Fundamentals of Acting)

The approved plan is to gather assessment data (in the form of syllabi, student assignments, exams, and enrollment/GPA data), examine this data through the lens of a rubric created by the department faculty in 2016, and then discuss the results through committee. Faculty for these courses collect a random sampling of a small percentage of their students’ work to analyze using the rubric. The rubric is a simple 3-point system (below target, minimally meets target, fully meets target). A committee then meets early in the fall to review assessment data. Percentages are calculated by committee using the above criteria. The committee represents the varying areas of the performing arts. Data are used to evaluate if the general education course effectively leads to mastery of the competencies, and if changes are required to the course structure. Overall, this assessment plan lacks some specificity and clarity in the language of the rubric and the specific ways in which data is gathered. Some of the ambiguity is understandable, and perhaps even necessary, as even just the two courses contained in this objective are significantly different in nature, and it is difficult to directly compare two assignments or exams (Theatre courses often rely on final performances and portfolios rather than written assessments) or the results of those assignments across courses. However, if the stated aim is to ensure that outcomes are being met effectively, some clarification on the data to be gathered and how the rubric should be applied would help. The assessment plan also outlines a committee process that does not appear to have been a typical feature of this process. Usually the bulk of the assessment effort is executed by a single faculty member, often with some input from others, but a (brief!) committee process to get all relevant faculty on the same page for each assessment season would be another way to increase the effectiveness of assessment.

GEOL 1107 (Real Monsters)

The current assessment plan evaluates Objective 7 outcomes by merging them into 4 coherent groups. Direct assessment uses exam questions and assignment grades to determine the proportion of satisfactory (C or better) and unsatisfactory responses. Geosciences Chair is to review results at the end of each semester, and a subcommittee in the Geosciences Department is to perform an assessment of the course every two years. Results of this assessment will be forwarded to the CoSE Assistant Chair overseeing Geosciences Gen Ed course assessment. From these reviews, the Geosciences Department will provide appropriate adjustments to the course. The plan is straightforward for implementation by different instructors of the course. In practice, the timing of the review process, i.e. each semester by the Department Chair, is too frequent and many-layered. It could instead be reorganized to a once-per-academic year review with the Chair at the end of May, and include a committee of instructors of the course. Learning outcome benchmarks should be stated. For example, 70% of students should achieve Satisfactory grades on learning outcome assessments.

CMP 2205 (Argumentation)

CMP 2205 relies on a variety of direct and indirect methods to assess the six Objective 7 competencies. As the assessment plan notes, the direct instruments include pre-test/post-test data collection, and assessment of an debate judging assignment and an in class debate. Data from the pre-test/post-test is analyzed quantitatively and the students' work in the debate judging assignment and the in class debate are judged by the instructor using the rubric outlined in the CMP 2205 Assessment Plan. Indirect instruments include the instructor's reviews of other assignments to make sure they align with the Objective 7 learning outcomes. Since the CMP 2205 assessment plan became part of Objective 7, it has been taught by only one faculty member, Dr. Sarah Partlow-Lefevre, a tenured professor in the department and ISU's Director of Debate. Dr. Partlow-Lefevre has diligently followed the assessment plan each time she has taught the course and believes it is effective but time consuming. Thus, Dr. DiSanza (department chair) will suggest to Dr. Partlow-Lefevre (current instructor for CMP 2205) that she not assess all competencies every year and will make sure that Professor Christensen, who will take over the course in spring 2022, is aware of the plan and is trained to carry it out.

PHIL 2201/2250 (Intro to Logic/Contemporary Moral Problems)

Both of these courses have approved assessment plans. All sections of the courses currently being taught include a comprehensive final exam, which is used to measure the extent to which students are achieving the outcomes. The program has modified its original schedule for assessment. Instead of assessing 1-2 outcomes each year, it collects exams every 3rd year and assesses them with regard to all of the learning outcomes. In off years, only indirect instruments are collected and reviewed. This minimizes the burden that assessment places on faculty but still allows the program to ensure that courses are appropriately rigorous and outcomes are being met. No further changes are suggested by the committee at this time.

SOC 2248 (Critical Analysis of Social Diversity)

The committee assesses one competency each semester. The procedure for assessment is as follows: the committee reviews the syllabi from all sections of SOC 2248 to ensure that the instructors of each section are adequately teaching and assessing the learning competencies, particularly the learning competency that is under review. The committee reviews the final assignments for all sections of SOC 2248 and categorizes the papers as satisfactory or unsatisfactory according to the criteria or the learning competency under review. The results of the assessment process are summarized in quantitative form. There are currently no proposed changes to the assessment procedures. The committee will continue to monitor the procedures as they relate to the learning outcomes. The committee will also monitor the recent literature surrounding race and ethnicity and the teaching of race and ethnicity to ensure that the course reflects the most current research and pedagogical strategies.

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.

CS/INFO 1181 (Computer Science and Programming I)

The CS program has undergone significant restructuring in the past 5 years (85% of faculty are new since 2018, and the program became its own department in 2020 with a new department chair being brought in from another department). Amidst these changes, there was a lack of communication regarding General Education assessment requirements. As a result, data was collected and reported only for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic years. GERC representatives have since worked with the department to clarify expectations and identify those who will be responsible for outcome assessment moving forward.

From the data collected for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic years, outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 5 were assessed with 85%, 44%, 78%, and 73% of students meeting expectations on the respective assessments. These scores indicate that assignments and exams are generally appropriate in meeting the Objective 7 outcomes and promote critical thinking, but that there is also room for improvement, particularly with preparing students for recognizing and applying appropriate practices for analyzing ambiguous problems. Recommended changes include improving consistency of administering, evaluating, and recording assessments, and regular coordination and communication with and between CS 1181 instructors—including dual enrollment instructors—regarding outcomes and assessment procedures.

POLS 2202 (Intro to Politics and Critical Thinking)

The survey results from the plan implementation provide a rough measure of how many students are meeting the objective. The scores indicate that a range of 69.69% to 74.40% of students achieve the learning outcomes. Assignments and exams are generally appropriate in meeting the Objective 7 outcomes and promoting critical

thinking. Assignments generally ask students to use evidence to draw conclusions. Recommended changes include better articulation of the Objective 7 outcomes in ECP workshop and interactions between ECP instructors and faculty liaisons. Improved ECP communication and mentoring should improve the percentage of students that faculty report as achieving the learning outcomes.

HIST (HIST1100: History in Film; HIST 1120: Special Topics in World History; HIST 1118: US History and Culture)

Instructors gave the assessment activity at various times in the semester during their course, usually in the later stages of the semester in order to better measure learning and achievement from the course. Selections from those assessment results were gathered in shared Box folders at the end of each semester. All students submitted responses to the activities, and the instructors chose a random sampling of 10 examples or 10% of enrolled students from each course section. Although these activities allowed students to engage with each of the outcome competencies of Objective 7, department faculty assessed student achievement on one of those competencies each year. Assignment questions changed somewhat in each class year to year to provide better measurement of the specific competency under review that academic year.

Grades across multiple sections of History Objective 7 class show a common pattern of a B grade as the most frequent student result. There were some semesters with HIST 1118 that show an unusually high percentage of A grades. This seems to be due to a particular adjunct instructor who had some large online classes. But 1118 is an anomaly with an ECP instructor and the department has clarified expectations with professional development. Removing those selected cases suggests a fairly consistent distribution across multiple sections. On all other counts, the learning outcomes seem to be sufficient for this objective.

ANTH/ENGL/LANG 1107 (Nature of Language)

For the years 2016-2019, an average of 63% of students earned a ‘satisfactory’ or higher for outcomes 1, 2, 5, and 6. For these years, outcomes 3 and 4 were unable to be assessed due to a lack of sufficient data (n=3), due to the previous instructor’s retirement. As all outcomes will be assessed each year going forward, data will be sufficient for future five-year assessments. There were no target percentages identified for these years. For 2020, the percentage of students meeting the ‘approaches’, ‘meets’, or ‘exceeds’ criteria for outcomes 3 and 4 were 65% and 93%, respectively. The percentage of students rated as ‘meets’ or higher were 44% and 75%, respectively. While the percentages for outcome 4, “create, analyze, and evaluate/interpret diverse perspectives and solutions” were excellent, exceeding the targets for these outcomes, the percentages for outcome 3, “Identify and apply relevant information for problem solving”, did not meet the target. Indirect assessment data of outcomes 3 and 4 for 2020 suggest that students feel they have at least been introduced to the skills needed to demonstrate these outcomes, with 96% of student survey respondents agreeing with

statements that they had at least been introduced to these skills. In addition, 75% of student respondents felt they could now demonstrate that skill at the beginner level or higher for outcome 3 and 68% for outcome 4. While this confidence is a good sign, student perceptions of skills developments appear to be inflated compared to actual measured performance for Outcome 3--identify and apply relevant information for problem solving. After assessing outcomes for 2020, the course has been revised to provide more opportunities to directly practice outcome 3 and to include metacognitive strategies for self-assessment of learning specific to this skill. Also, activities encouraging participation and attendance have been increased in number. The course also offers flexibility, including alternate practice o for students who may need to miss class due to work, illness, or family obligation.

Suggested revisions to the assessment plan include: 1) articulating clear criteria for each measure to allow for a clear rating of 'approaches criteria', 'meets criteria' and 'exceeds' criteria, 2) articulating clear targets for each outcome: 75% of students in the class will at least 'approach' the criteria. 60% of students in class will 'meet' or 'exceed' criteria. As this is an introductory class in linguistics, two targets were identified for the 2020 year, one including the 'approaches expectations' and another for 'meets' or 'exceeds' expectations/criteria. Many students in these classes may not achieve mastery of critical thinking outcomes during one semester, which may be the first in which they are introduced to critical thinking methods and skills, so expecting mastery in an introductory course may be unrealistic. Therefore, we expect that 75% of students in the course will at least approach the criteria/demonstrate beginning skills. We expect that 60% of students in the class may achieve the 'meets' or 'exceeds' criteria for each outcome/skill, and 3) including a standardized survey as an instrument for indirect measurement of student perception of whether they have met criteria. Target: 75% of students will indicate they have at least been introduced to the outcome skill. 60% of students will indicate they are able to perform the skill at a beginner or confident level.

THEA 1118/2251

(1118 Oral Interpretation of Literature)

Assessment data reveals overall success for this course. According to rubric data submitted by faculty, based on a random sample of student work, 100% of the Objective 7 outcomes have been either "minimally meets target" or "fully meets target" This also tracks with the overall grade distribution being primarily "A"s and "B"s. There is room for greater clarity and consistency with the language of the rubric and how it is applied, and perhaps the assessment process would be served by using a larger percentage of student work. To address this, the faculty involved in assessment should meet prior to next semester to discuss how we might adjust the rubric language and the percentage of student work we sample.

(2251 Fundamentals of Acting)

Assessment data for this course reveals overall success in achieving its learning outcomes. Roughly 60% of the student work sampled was rated Excellent in terms of successfully achieving an Objective 7 outcome, with the remaining percentage being rated Satisfactory. Once again, there is room for greater clarity in the way the data is

gathered and organized, and there is a question of how effective the rubric analysis is when such a small percentage of student work is being analyzed - but the trend of student success also tracks with the overall grade distribution. This indicates that the sampled student work is indeed random and generally reflective of the experience of the majority of the class. Instructors for this course should confer to further specify the assessment rubric language prior to the start of the next semester and implement any changes. The department should also discuss adjusting the overall assessment plan to include a larger sampling of student work but with less assignments - perhaps the implementation of a “signature assignment” that measures several (or even all) of the necessary outcomes in one cumulative performance.

GEOL 1107 (Real Monsters)

The assessment plan does not establish a benchmark proportion of Satisfactory grades for each objective. Results from the five years show consistently >70% satisfactory results for all objectives, with a notable exception. There are two academic years for which “Identify and apply relevant information for problem solving” received Satisfactory values of 56 and 60%. This objective is evaluated from one question on the final exam, and that may account for the variance observed between years. Adding another exam question or assignment may help reduce variance in assessment, but more importantly, this result suggests that this learning outcome could be addressed explicitly, and repeatedly in the course through assignments that require distinguishing information as relevant or irrelevant to addressing a problem.

CMP 2205 (Argumentation)

This class is offered once a year and the numbers are relatively small (8-16 students). Early college students are assessed with the rest of the class. After taking the course, most students (78%) were able to critically frame and analyze problems and support their analysis through research (Competency 1). Most students demonstrated the ability to explore and understand different perspectives on questions of probability (78%) (Competency 2). Most students (78%) were able to find and assess the quality of evidence. They could identify which parts of a piece of evidence were relevant to and best supported the argument (Competency 3).

The vast majority of students (88%) were able to structure an argument and propose critically thought-out solutions (Competency 4). The vast majority of students (88%) were able to analyze public policy problems, assess the relative costs and benefits of potential solutions and prepare a strong argument defending their chosen approach (Competency 5). Most students (78%) were able to articulate the results of their problem-solving process and defend those results in the context of debate. They were able to synthesize their research and create a coherent written and/or oral case for their solutions (Competency 6). The committee does not recommend any changes at this time.

PHIL 2201/2250 (Intro to Logic/Contemporary Moral Problems)

The Philosophy Program finds that by far the majority of students in these courses are achieving the learning outcomes to a minimally adequate degree. Smaller percentages

are deemed to have achieved “proficiency” in the outcomes. Syllabi and main assignments indicate that the courses are appropriately rigorous and well-aligned with the outcomes for Objective 7. The committee does not recommend any changes at this time.

SOC 2248 (Critical Analysis of Social Diversity)

SOC 2248 was redesigned in 2020 using an intersectional approach that recognizes the role of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, and age in shaping individuals’ life experiences. The course contains expanded coverage of the literature relating to theories of race and ethnicity and incorporates academic and non-academic readings, documentaries, and short films that introduce students to various perspectives. The revised course is structured around the core competencies and was taught for the first time during the fall semester of 2020. It includes a self-study assignment in which students will be required to apply the theoretical concepts learned in the course to their lived experience. The self-study assignment requires the students to demonstrate mastery of the six learning competencies. Assessment of the data for SOC 2248 from the Spring semester of 2016 through the Fall 2020 semester indicates that the course successfully attained the desired outcome. A total of 1039 students participated in the course. 691 (74.1%) students met the requirements for successful mastery of the elements of Objective 7 (as measured by a grade of A or B). Two of the learning competency outcomes will be evaluated per year. As the department teaches two sessions per semester, one of which is a late eight-week session, we will be reevaluating the late-eight session to ensure that the material is equivalent to the full semester course.

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.

The committee agrees that the current list of courses in Objective 7 contributes to a strong, coherent system of general education and need not be changed.

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 suggests slight changes in verbage to Outcomes 4 and 5

4. To create, analyze, evaluate and/or interpret diverse perspectives and solutions. (The committee agreed that not all courses in Objective 7 can accomplish all aspects of this outcome so “and/or” was inserted for flexibility)

5. To **articulate** a reasoned framework for drawing conclusions and/or recommending solutions. (The committee agreed that “articulate” is more measurable than “establish”)

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.

Critical thinking skills are essential to problem solving in a diverse and increasingly complex workplace. The objective supports Idaho State University’s general mission to deliver “high quality academic programs”. To prepare students to work effectively and be leaders in their careers, these programs require students to engage in deep level thinking about the content and practices within and across disciplines. Further, university graduates should be prepared to apply their learning as they act in the world, as articulated in the University Vision statement: “to develop citizens who will learn from the past, think critically about the present, and provide leadership to enrich the future in a diverse, global society.” The committee does not recommend any changes to Objective 7 within the general education system.

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