

## General Education Assessment Activities and Results

Below are some examples of General Education assessment activities, along with their findings and the applications of those findings. This document is not an exhaustive list of all of the assessment activities that the General Education program has completed or that are underway.

### Direct Assessment Activities

#### 2017 Intellectual Heritage Ethical Reasoning Assessment

---

**Project description.** In 2013, GenEd underwent an external review. Reviewers noted that the curriculum did not address ethics or ethical reasoning. Around the same time, Intellectual Heritage was reconsidering the orientation of the two semester sequence of courses. In 2016-2017, Mosaic I and II were renamed “Intellectual Heritage I: The Good Life” and “Intellectual Heritage II: The Common Good”, reflecting themes and text selections that had emerged over the preceding years. In order to address the external review recommendations and support IH’s curricular revision, GenEd and IH partnered to develop a rubric to assess ethical reasoning in IH. Beginning in the summer of 2016, IH instructors gathered and, over a series of meetings, developed learning goals and benchmarks resulting in the Ethical Reasoning rubric used for this assessment. In early summer 2017, GenEd tested the rubric for reliability resulting in a second round of edits. The final version of the rubric included the following elements: Perspective Taking and Self-Examination; Historical, Social, and Cultural Contexts for Value Systems; Responsibility to Others (Relational Ethics or Communal Ethics); Effects of Power; Complexity and Ambiguity; and Common Good.

**Findings.** The revised version of the rubric generated an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability. On average, between both courses, students demonstrated competency between a benchmark of 1 and 2 on all six standards. There is an increase in competency on five of the six standards with a minor/negligible decrease on one standard indicating that progress is being made between IH 851 and IH 852. The decrease in competency related to element #1 of the rubric, Perspective Taking and Self-Examination, which could be explained by the differing orientations of the two semesters.

**Application.** The intensive rubric development process and validation scoring included nearly forty of the ninety instructors teaching for the Intellectual Heritage Program. Many instructors have since included ethical reasoning language in their syllabi and assignment designs. IH leadership have developed a learning goal addressing ethical reasoning to be integrated into the IH area learning goals based on the language of the rubric.

#### 2015-2016 Scientific Reasoning Rubric Development Project

---

**Project Description.** Over the course of 2015-2016, six faculty members teaching in the GenEd Science and Technology area met to develop a rubric to assess the development of scientific reasoning skills in GenEd Science and Technology courses. Using an inductive process beginning with the assignments used in their own courses, they developed a rubric consisting of four elements, with four benchmarks per

element. Elements included Science in the Everyday World, Impact of Social Context on Inquiry, Understanding and Applying the Scientific Method, and Critically Assessing Sources of Data. Six instructors (only one of whom was among the original designers of the rubric) then used the rubric to score anonymized student work generated in their Science and Technology GenEd sections to test for reliability.

**Findings.** The only element on which a sufficient level of reliability was reached was the fourth element. Lack of inter-rater agreement on the remaining elements of the rubric demonstrated that further work remained to be done on the rubric.

**Application.** A second round of edits to the rubric was carried out during 2017-2018. Raters agreed that although the Science and Technology GenEd area includes many courses related to technological innovation and advancement, the rubric did not represent these courses adequately, leaving many raters to edit the rubric mentally while scoring. Edits to the rubric included reflecting the variable nature of courses in the inventory. A second round of reading to test the reliability of the revised rubric is currently underway.

---

#### 2014 Analytical Reading and Writing (First Year Writing) Source Incorporation Assessment

---

**Project Description.** Prior to 2014, English 802 assignments required students to find sources to support a position they already held on an argument in a course text. Revised English 802 assignments require students to develop their own argument on some issue related to a course text based on original research. The aim of this project was to examine both the types of sources students used in their projects, as well as how effectively they incorporated these sources into their arguments. A sample of Assignment #3 papers was collected at the end of the Fall 2014 term and compared to a sample of Assignment #3 papers using the previous prompt. The FYW Assessment Coordinator scored papers using a rubric that measured source suitability, use of sources in argument, source formatting, and source integration.

**Findings.** The data showed that students addressing the new Assignment #3 use more non-course sources than did students writing on the old Assignment #3. While the numbers show that students are only somewhat successful in citing and integrating source material, students performed about the same in these areas as did students addressing the old assignment. This assessment of Assignment #3 suggests that English 802 students require instruction on critically reading popular sources.

**Application.** How best to teach popular sources is a topic regularly discussed at First Year Writing faculty development meetings. Library sessions have been adjusted to emphasize to students that all published material is making an argument in some way.

---

#### 2009-2010 Contextualized Learning in Mosaic I and II (now Intellectual Heritage I and II)

---

**Project Description.** In 2009-2010, the Intellectual Heritage Program had just transitioned to a non-chronological format organized around themed units. The purpose of this study was to determine how well the course met the Contextualized Learning GenEd competency. Faculty members in the program collaborated to design a rubric reflecting the following elements: Citing Texts; Evaluation;

Cultural/Historical Synthesis; Contemporary World Synthesis; Themes/Units Synthesis; and Correctness (related to grammatical conventions).

**Findings.** Students were judged to be more competent in the areas of Correctness and Citing Texts and less competent in the Synthesis areas. In the areas of Citing Texts and Correctness, the rubric scores correlated well with final grades in Mosaic courses. Yet, insignificant correlations were found between course grades and rubric scores in the areas of Evaluation and Synthesis.

**Application.** The Program restructured its leadership, and introduced faculty coordinators who could provide support for instructors in developing assignments and course materials to promote student skills related to synthesis and evaluation. The study also pointed toward larger issues faced by instructors in creating coherence across units. In 2016, IH revised the two-course sequence to move away from themed units and toward organizing the two courses around related but distinct semester-long themes.

## Indirect Assessment Activities

### 2017-18 Class Size Study

---

**Project Description.** The budget model transition Temple underwent in 2015 prompted concerns on the behalf of instructors and GenEd leadership that class sizes would increase due to budgetary pressures. To test the assumption that class sizes had increased, and to study the impact of class size on student learning, a study that involving both descriptive and inferential elements was undertaken. A model was developed to test the impact of class size on student learning, using grade as the outcome variable.

**Findings.** No evidence could be found that class size has significantly and systematically increased, though there was evidence that class size had increased in the case of two colleges, neither of which offer significant numbers of GenEd sections. Despite repeated modifications to the model in response to critical feedback from a variety of readers, no consistent evidence could be found that larger class sizes generally positively or negatively impact student grades in GenEd classes.

**Application.** As a result of this study, we have not pursued the External Report recommendation that we introduce class size guidelines.

### 2016 Student Focus Groups

---

**Project Description.** Six focus groups were organized to help GenEd leadership understand the perception of GenEd among students, and to give students a chance to share ideas for improving the program. Three focus groups were general, and three included only Honors students, ESL students and juniors and seniors. Research assistants using a standardized script ran the focus groups.

**Findings.** Feedback from students was generally positive. Not all Temple students fully understand the purpose of the GenEd requirements. Students were most unhappy with inconsistencies between sections of GenEds. Students reported finding it difficult to find GenEds that matched their interests,

that larger class sizes negatively impacted the learning behaviors of some students, and that instructors had a very high impact on their experience and learning in GenEd classes.

**Application.** Based on this feedback, a course search tool has been developed and housed on the GenEd website to make it easier for students to find courses that reflect their interests. A major study of the impact of class size on student grades has been undertaken. Complaints related to inconsistencies in workload and grading schemas between different sections of the same GenEd are now being addressed through faculty development activities, the development of a data dashboard for instructors and chairs, and the inclusion of this consideration in the recertification process. Findings from these focus groups have reinforced the importance of continuing with annual course recertification activities.

## 2013 External Review

---

**Project Description.** In 2012-2013, an external review committee consisting of faculty members from institutions of higher education both in-state and out-of-state examined the self-study and associated documents generated by GenEd, and met with faculty, administration and students. Their task was to assess the viability of the GenEd structure introduced in 2008, to determine whether the balance of credits was appropriate, to determine whether Temple's GenEd program was consistent with those of peer institutions, to consider specific additions to the program, and to consider whether the design of the program was achieving its intended goals.

**Findings.** The review team found the current GenEd structure to be an improvement over the former Core Curriculum. They deemed the balance of credits to be appropriate. Recommendations included conducting regular focus groups with students and other stakeholders, revisiting whether analysis of data was sufficiently represented in GenEd Quantitative Literacy courses, addressing ethical reasoning more explicitly in the program, setting guidelines for class sizes at the GenEd level, integrating community-based learning and engaging faculty members in assessment.

**Application.** On the basis of External Review Committee recommendations, the following steps have been taken: focus groups have been held yearly to learn about student, faculty and stakeholder experiences with, and ideas about the program; a direct assessment of learning in Quantitative Literacy courses has been launched using an AAC&U Value rubric, which will allow leadership to determine the extent to which calculation is occurring in the GenEd classroom; ethical reasoning has been rendered an explicit goal of the Intellectual Heritage Program; a report on the impact of class size on student grades has been produced; a proposal for integrating community-based participatory research into the GenEd curriculum has been generated; and dozens of GenEd faculty members have been engaged in the planning and implementation of GenEd assessment projects.