Some “Dos and Don’ts” for General Education Programme Assessment

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A Sample of Global Higher Education Reform Initiatives
Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU)
Florida Board of Governors (BOG) Regulation

6.017 Criteria for Awarding the Baccalaureate Degree

(1) Except as approved by the Board of Governors, all students receiving a baccalaureate degree within the State University System must meet the following graduation requirements:

(a) Completion of thirty-six (36) semester hours of general education courses in the subject areas of communication, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, including:

1. Six (6) semester hours of English coursework and six semester hours of additional coursework in which the student is required to demonstrate college-level writing skills through multiple assignments. Each institution shall designate the courses that fulfill the writing requirements of this section. Students awarded college credit in English based on their demonstration of writing skills through dual enrollment, advanced placement, or international baccalaureate instruction shall be considered to have satisfied this requirement to the extent of the college credit awarded.

2. Six (6) semester hours of mathematics coursework at the level of college algebra or higher. Applied logic, statistics and other computation-based coursework that may not be offered by a mathematics department may be used to fulfill three (3) of the six (6) hours required by this section. Students awarded college credit based on their demonstration of mathematics skills at the level of college algebra or higher through dual enrollment, advanced placement, or international baccalaureate instruction shall be considered to have satisfied this requirement to the extent of the college credit awarded.
FGCU Student Learning Outcomes (1997)

- AESTHETIC SENSITIVITY
  Know and appreciate artistic expression.

- CULTURALLY DIVERSE PERSPECTIVE
  Acknowledge the contributions of diverse cultures.

- ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY
  Demonstrate environmental consciousness and serve as a steward of the natural world.

- EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
  Communicate effectively using a full range of tools and techniques.

- ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY
  Demonstrate ethical responsibility to self and others.

- INFORMATION LITERACY
  Accept responsibility to be informed, respect intellectual property rights, and support freedom of access to information.

- PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITIES
  Use critical, analytical, scientific, creative, and system thinking to solve problems.

- TECHNOLOGICAL LITERACY
  Master the use of technology tools.

Core Requirement 2.7.3
The institution requires in each undergraduate degree program the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for course equivalency. *(General Education)*

Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1
The institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.

FGCU General Education Goals and Objectives (2004)

GOAL 1: AESTHETIC SENSIBILITY
- **Objective 1:** Know and understand the variety of aesthetic frameworks that have shaped, and continue to shape, human creative arts.
- **Objective 2:** Analyze and evaluate the aesthetic principles at work in literary and artistic composition, intellectual systems, and disciplinary and professional practices.
- **Objective 3:** Collaborate with others in projects involving aesthetic awareness, participation, and/or analysis.

GOAL 2: CULTURALLY DIVERSE PERSPECTIVE
- **Objective 1:** Know and understand the diversity of the local and global communities, including cultural, social, political, and economic differences.
- **Objective 2:** Analyze, evaluate, and assess the impact of differences in ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, native language, sexual orientation, and intellectual/disciplinary approaches.
- **Objective 3:** Participate in collaborative projects requiring productive interaction with culturally-diverse people, ideas, and values.

GOAL 3: ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
- **Objective 1:** Know the issues related to economic, social, and ecological sustainability.
- **Objective 2:** Analyze and evaluate ecological issues locally and globally.
- **Objective 3:** Participate in collaborative projects requiring awareness and/or analysis of ecological and environmental issues.

GOAL 4: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
- **Objective 1:** Know the fundamental principles for effective and appropriate communication, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.
- **Objective 2:** Organize thoughts and compose ideas for a variety of audiences, using a range of communication tools and techniques.
- **Objective 3:** Participate in collaborative projects requiring effective communications among team members.

Approved by General Education Task Force
March 31, 2004

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FGCU General Education Goals and Objectives (2004)

GOAL 5: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY
- Objective 1: Know and understand the key ethical issues related to a variety of disciplines and professions.
- Objective 2: Analyze and evaluate key ethical issues in a variety of disciplinary and professional contexts.
- Objective 3: Participate in collaborative projects requiring ethical analysis and/or decision-making.

GOAL 6: INFORMATION LITERACY
- Objective 1: Identify and locate multiple sources of information using a variety of methods.
- Objective 2: Analyze and evaluate information within a variety of disciplinary and professional contexts.
- Objective 3: Participate in collaborative analysis and/or application of information resources.

GOAL 7: PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITIES
- Objective 1: Understand the multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of knowledge.
- Objective 2: Apply critical, analytical, creative, and systems thinking in order to recognize and solve problems.
- Objective 3: Work individually and collaboratively to recognize and solve problems.

GOAL 8: TECHNOLOGY LITERACY
- Objective 1: Develop knowledge of modern technology.
- Objective 2: Process information through the use of technology.
- Objective 3: Collaborate with others using technology tools.

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March 31, 2004
FGCU General Education Goals and Objectives (2004)

GOAL 9: COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT
- Objective 1: Know and understand the important and complex relationships between individuals and the communities in which they live and work.
- Objective 2: Analyze, evaluate, and assess human needs and practices within the context of community structures and traditions.
- Objective 3: Participate collaboratively in community service projects.

GOAL 10: PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
- Objective 1: Identify personal values; acquire knowledge of ways to enhance mental and physical wellness; become knowledgeable about goal-setting strategies, including the goal of life-long learning.
- Objective 2: Challenge and defend personal values; select wellness strategies; set personal goals and objectives, including the goal of life-long learning.
- Objective 3: In putting values into practice, accept personal responsibility for consequences of actions; practice and refine wellness strategies; refine goals, including the goal of life-long learning, based on additional knowledge, experience, and interaction with others.

Approved by General Education Task Force
March 31, 2004
Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1: Non-compliance.

While the institution established goals for student performance for each of the general education competencies, the institution did not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that assessment results are used to improve student attainment of the competencies.

The institution should provide evidence demonstrating that assessment results are used to improve graduates’ attainment of the college-level competencies within the general education core.

From the Report of the Florida Gulf Coast University Off-Site Review Committee, 10 May 2005.
Competency 1: Quantitative Reasoning
- Solve mathematical problems;
- Analyze and interpret quantitative data;
- Summarize data into graphic and tabular formats;
- Make valid inferences from data;
- Distinguish between valid and invalid quantitative analysis and reasoning.

Competency 2: Oral Communication
- Select a topic, and develop it for a specific audience and purpose, with respect for diverse perspectives;
- Organize and deliver a clear and effective presentation, with command of verbal and nonverbal communication;
- Use active listening skills in interpersonal settings;
- Participate in and lead group discussions effectively.

Competency 3: Written Communication
- Employ the conventions of standard written English;
- Select a topic, and develop it for a specific audience and purpose, with respect for diverse perspectives;
- Select, organize, and relate ideas and information with coherence, clarity, and unity;
- Develop research skills including the ability to collect, analyze, synthesize, and accurately present and document information;
- Apply critical reading skills.

Competency 4: Critical Thinking
- Define a problem using appropriate terminology;
- Select and organize information;
- Identify assumptions and underlying relationships;
- Synthesize information, and draw reasoned inferences;
- Formulate an appropriate problem solving strategy;
- Evaluate the feasibility of the strategy.

Approved by the General Education Council, fall 2005.
Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1:

The Commission on Colleges reviewed the institution’s Second Monitoring Report submitted following reaffirmation. No additional report was requested.

From the Commission on Colleges notification letter, 25 January 2008.
FGCU General Education Assessment Instruments (2010-2015)
Don’t allow external requirements to be the sole drivers for your assessment plan.
Do develop assessments that reflect your institution’s student learning goals.
Don’t wait until the last minute to develop your assessment plan.
Do involve faculty from the very beginning of the planning process.
Don’t attempt to assess everything you do, all of the time.
Do develop an assessment plan that is both viable and manageable.
“I thought I was on to something but I can’t figure out how to move it.”

Don’t try to ‘reinvent the wheel.’
Do utilize ‘best practices’ from successful general education programmes similar to your own.
Don’t assume that many faculty members will be eager to take on additional workload.
Do expect that it may be necessary to train, support, reward, and even recruit faculty for their time and expertise.