BACKGROUND

The General Education Committee (GEC) began collecting evidence of student learning in 2007. GEC made a conscious effort to start small in terms of the number of students it collected evidence from (one section from every course in the General Education Program every three years). Beginning in 2013, GEC expanded the assessment system. Implementation of the assessment plan will help assure students, their parents, the public, the Board of Trustees, and accrediting bodies that students are learning the skills and knowledge that the General Education Program promises to deliver.

ASSESSMENT PLAN

CYCLE: Assessment takes place on a 3 year cycle to be established by the General Education Committee (posted on the General Education website).

RUBRICS: Faculty teaching General Education courses assess student learning of the Knowledge Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that are listed in the General Education Handbook. Through their Course Assessment Plans (CAP) or through the online curricular process, faculty have identified which of the Skills SLOs they will teach and assess in their GE courses. The Skills rubrics are modified from the AAC&U Value rubrics. Each faculty member uses the GE Skill and Knowledge rubrics to describe each student’s performance in some sections of General Education courses. The rubrics are posted on the General Education website.

NUMBER OF SECTIONS: GEC’s goal is to be as statistically confident as it can be about the level of student learning in the General Education Program. After running a power analysis that looked at various margins of error and confidence levels to estimate student performance, GEC settled on the following plan, keeping practical limitations in mind. With 95% confidence and a margin of error of ± 0.15 (on the 0 to 4 point scale), 138 students need to be assessed in each course. GEC opted for a confidence level of 95% because it is the most widely used level in applied sciences and corresponds to the standard significance level of α = 0.05. A margin of error of 0.15 means that the average score on the 0-4 rubric for the population of students will be estimated with this amount of precision. For instance, if a 95% confidence interval is computed to be 2.7 +/- 0.15 based on our sample of students, there is a high level of certainty that the average score on the rubric for all such GVSU students will fall somewhere between 2.55 and 2.85.

In some cases GEC will collect more or less than the number shown above based on practical considerations (the calculation below assumes a course size of 30 students). In some cases, courses have fewer than 138 students across all sections, which will lead to a greater margin of error. In others, rather than sampling every section (or even a large percentage of sections), GEC opted to sample as close to 138 students as it could without requesting an unreasonably large percentage of the sections.

Most of the courses in the General Education Program offer a small number of sections each year (Figure 1). Although GEC will collect data from more sections overall than it did prior to 2013, courses that have only 1-4 sections (211 courses, 67%) will continue to collect data for only 1 section. Table 1 shows the number of sections that will need to collect assessment data.
Table 1. Number of Sections of General Education Courses That Will Be Assessed Every 3 Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Sections (2017-18)</th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>% of Courses</th>
<th>Number of Sections Assessed</th>
<th>Margin of error with a 95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Greater than 0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Greater than 0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Greater than 0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Greater than 0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15+</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>±0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FACULTY COLLECTING THE DATA: Unit heads choose which sections will collect data. Student learning is a product of what the student brings to the course (motivation, background, etc.) and what the faculty member does to facilitate learning (the pedagogy of the class); thus, GEC want to maximize the number of faculty that collect data. In general, GEC avoids having a faculty member collect data from multiple sections or multiple courses within the same semester.

COURSE ASSESSMENT REPORT: GEC cannot accomplish its goal of increasing student learning of the General Education Knowledge and Skills SLOs by just collecting data; it requires a sustained effort to reflect on course design and goal implementation to help students meet the General Education goals. The ultimate goal of assessment is to improve learning through reflective and informed classroom practices that preserve high expectations. The Course Assessment Report provides a vehicle for this reflection and planning. For each semester that the unit collects data, it need only create one CAR, compiling information from all sections assessed. CARs are due in January for Fall data collection and May for Winter data collection.
General Education Assessment Process

Course Proposal - describe how SLOs will be taught and assessed

Curriculum Process

Course Re/design

Teach the course

Course Assessment (Once every 3 years) → Collect Data

Write Course Assessment Report (CAR)

GEC Review of CAR

Not Adequate → GEC Provides Feedback

Adequate → Course Recertified for 3 years

Changes to the General Education Program