All Things Assessment at KU is edited by Dr. Gil Clary, and members of the Advisory Board are Dr. David Beougher, Dr. Mahfuzul Khondaker, Dr. Michelle Kiec, Dr. John McCarthy, Professor Krista Prock, and Dr. Carole Wells. Suggestions for articles, announcements, and feedback of any sort are welcomed and appreciated.

Editor’s Note: This issue of the 2014-2015 Assessment Newsletter, along with the other issues planned for this academic year, will be devoted to assessment activities related to Kutztown University’s revised General Education program. The feature article for this issue is an Executive Summary of the first three-year cycle of assessments of General Education; the article was prepared by Professor Krista Prock on behalf of the General Education Assessment Committee. The summary is also the starting point for conversations about General Education that are being held this year. The schedule for February’s conversations appears at the end of the newsletter and you are encouraged to participate in one or more of the discussions about General Education at KU.

General Education at Kutztown University: An Introduction
E. Gil Clary, Office of Assessment

The revised General Education program was implemented in Fall 2011 for entering students and the revised program triggered a great deal of activity on campus. One important effort involved the designation of existing courses as fitting the thematic elements of KU’s General Education model. The thematic elements are:

A. Writing Intensive
B. Quantitative Literacy OR Computer-Intensive
C. Visual Literacy OR Communication-Intensive
D. Cultural Diversity
E. Critical Thinking

Academic programs across the university have submitted hundreds of courses with specific designations. The 2010 agreement concerning General Education at KU charged the General Education Committee with the responsibility of determining if the courses fit the criteria. As of January 2015, approximately 600 courses have thematic elements.

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A second important effort involved assessments of the General Education program. This work is the responsibility of the General Education Assessment Committee. According to the 2010 agreement, assessments are to be conducted on a three-year cycle, and in executing this responsibility, the General Education Assessment Committee devoted the 2011-2012 Academic Year to assessments of Goal 1, the 2012-2013 Academic Year to assessments of Goal 2, and the 2013-2014 Academic Year to assessments of Goal 3. The learning goals of Kutztown University’s General Education Program are:

**Goal 1**: To cultivate intellectual and practical skills that are practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance. The domains of Goal 1 include Critical Thinking, Written and Oral Communication, Quantitative Literacy, and Wellness.

**Goal 2**: To develop an understanding of human cultures and the physical and natural world that is focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring. Domains of Goal 2 include the Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts.

**Goal 3**: To inculcate a sense of personal and social responsibility that is anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges. Goal 3 domains include civic knowledge and engagement, ethical reasoning and action, and personal qualities such as passion, cooperation, and commitment.

As noted above, the three academic years between Fall 2011 and Spring 2014 were devoted to assessments of the three General Education learning goals. The 2014–2015 academic year is dedicated to a University-wide reflection on the assessments that were conducted during this time period, the experiences of implementing the revised program, and the experiences of students, faculty, and staff with the revised program. This academic year, then, provides the two General Education committees the opportunities to consider findings, broadly defined, that have emerged in the first three years, and to discuss these findings with members of the campus community.

The Executive Summary that follows provides the highlights of the General Education Assessment Committee’s findings and experiences from the first three years of assessing the revised General Education program.

**GEAC Executive Summary**

Krista Prock, Rohrbach Library

This is a summary of the first cumulative report on the assessment of General Education provided by the Kutztown University General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC). Results are presented but should not be used to draw any conclusions about the abilities of KU students, as this was a pilot cycle in which volunteers were used and methods were refined. In outlining this process, GEAC identifies some minor concerns related to the General Education goals and domains.

Some suggestions related to the goals and to the assessment process follow the three-year summary.

**Highlights, Year 1 - Goal 1: Intellectual and Practical Skills**

- Create reporting templates
- Create an assessment cycle
- Use core courses to assess student performance on goal 1 during year 1
- Provide basic training for assessment volunteers
- Volunteers can use their own rubric/reporting template
Year One Results

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<th>PL – 1</th>
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<td>Written Communication</td>
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<td>Overall</td>
<td>GOAL 1</td>
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<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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PL = performance level, with 4 being the highest level of performance

Highlights, Year 2 - Goal 2: Big Questions in the Disciplines

- Move to goal based assessment from course based assessment. In year one the core general education courses were GEAC’s focus, in year 2 the focus is Goal 2
- Begin development of curriculum map for two purposes
  - generate a sample of courses for assessment purposes
  - determine whether students are exposed to all domains of General Education – are there enough courses in each domain?
- Develop training materials for assessment volunteers
- Develop promotional materials about General Education
- Some volunteers still use their own rubric/reporting template

Year Two Results

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<td>*96%/53%/53%</td>
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<td>42%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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*Not included in the aggregated evaluation

PL = performance level, with 4 being the highest level of performance
Highlights, Year 3 - Goal 3: Personal and Social Responsibility

- Courses selected for assessment purposes were generated using a database version of the curriculum map, created for a capstone project by a computer science student.
- In examining assessment results, it seems that some faculty are using a relative method (based on standards of the course), instead of the absolute method (based on goals of General Education). In the absolute method, one would only expect students in senior-level or capstone courses to achieve performance levels of 3 or 4 (with some exceptions, of course.) New training materials will address this, as will campus discussions.
- Simplification of the assessment process is necessary to make assessment of General Education sustainable and practical. Creation of a separate curriculum map for the purposes of assessment was discussed.
- Some volunteers still use their own performance standards within the provided reporting template.

Year Three Results

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<tr>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>Ethical Reasoning, Action</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>GOAL 3</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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</table>

PL = performance level, with 4 being the highest level of performance

GEAC Recommendations

As explained before, because this has been a pilot cycle of assessment that relied on volunteers, GEAC cannot recommend any changes to the General Education curriculum. Based on the experiences outlined above, GEAC will recommend some ways in which the General Education goals and domains can be clarified and the assessment process can be improved. Some of the recommendations below are for the GEC, others are for GEAC, and some are meant for both committees.

Recommendations:

- Develop expectations for student performance. This is a task that the GEAC and GEC will coordinate but must be a campus-wide conversation;
- Ensure that common rubrics/reporting templates are used for General Education assessment;
- Align thematic courses with the goals and domains of General Education;
  - Define with which goal/domain each competency belongs;
  - Outline reasons for competencies;
• GEAC will continue to refine the assessment process;
• Further study opportunities KU students have to meet the goals of General Education, i.e. course offerings, extracurricular activities, etc.

**Forums on Assessments of General Education**

**February 2015**

As noted earlier, the General Education Committees are sponsoring a number of conversations about the assessment findings and experiences of the first three year cycle of assessments of the learning goals of the revised General Education program. The first conversation was held on December 10, 2014 and the schedule for February 2015 appears below. Additional discussions will be held during the spring semester. The committees encourage members of the campus community to participate in these conversations.

February 6, 3:00 p.m., Admin 317: General Discussion of the Findings from 2011 – 2014
February 9, 10:00 a.m., MSU 312: Written and Oral Communication Learning Goals
February 27, 3:00 p.m., MSU 312: Critical Thinking Learning Goal

**2014 – 2015 Assessment Newsletter**

**Future Issues**

Two additional issues are planned for the spring semester which will also center on General Education Assessment. The feature article for Issue 2 will be a discussion of the highlights of Kutztown University’s implementation of the revised General Education program, 2010 - 2014. The basis for the report is a presentation of the University’s experiences with the revised General Education program delivered by Professor Prock and Dr. Derr at the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ (AAC&U) annual conference on General Education and Assessment. Issue 3 will feature commentaries and reflections from members of the campus community on the current state of General Education at Kutztown University.