

General Education: planning, implementing, and assessing

As outlined at <http://e-catalog.sewanee.edu/arts-sciences/degrees/general-education-program/>, “Sewanee’s general education curriculum encourages intellectual curiosity and exposure to the significant traditions and ways of seeing the world that our disciplines and interdisciplinary programs present.” Our Gen Ed curriculum is flexible enough to allow students to play to their strengths while also broad enough to prompt them to explore new disciplines and perspectives.

Most introductory courses (and some more advanced ones) contribute to the Gen Ed curriculum by fulfilling one (sometimes two) Learning Objectives. If you are teaching a course that fulfills any Gen Ed objective, you’ll want to think about *planning*, *implementing*, and *assessing*. (You have to do a report for *each* objective attached to your course.)

Associate Dean Alex Bruce (ambruce@sewanee.edu) coordinates assessment for Gen Ed; please feel free to contact him with any questions. Also, your chair and colleagues can offer examples / advice on any aspect of the stages below.

Planning:

- Review the particulars of the objectives at <http://e-catalog.sewanee.edu/arts-sciences/degrees/general-education-program/>.
- Review also the assessment reporting forms at <https://new.sewanee.edu/offices/the-college-of-arts-sciences-offices/dean-of-the-college/general-education-assessment/> so that you have a sense of what will be asked of you as the instructor at the end of the semester. Importantly, be aware that while Gen Ed objectives may intersect and even overlap with disciplinary objectives, this assessment process asks you to focus on the Gen Ed objectives. It is possible for a student to meet a Gen Ed learning objective while not fully mastering the disciplinary content (and vice-versa): the course grade is not tantamount to a Gen Ed assessment.
- On that same web page, review the summaries of assessment reports from the past years. These reports importantly note (a) the range of assessment tools (assignments) that faculty have employed and (b) the ways faculty have adapted courses. Again, confer with your chair and colleagues for examples and advice.

Implementing:

- **Include the specific Gen Ed learning objectives on your course syllabus (required).** Doing so helps your students understand the place of Gen Ed in your course.
- As you plan assignments and assessment opportunities (exams, papers, quizzes, reports, pre- and post-tests, survey items on the course evaluation, etc.) tie them to the Gen Ed objectives. *You are encouraged to have multiple assessment opportunities throughout the course*; not everything should hinge upon a final paper / test.

Assessing:

- Gather your data. Such should include quantifiable data that can be reported on the forms; anecdotal data can also be useful for your discussion of outcomes.
 - Except for Learning Objective 7, there are not stated definitions of “superior” to “unacceptable” because of the range of possible assignments across many disciplines. Confer with colleagues to shape an appropriate rubric, and see also the sample rubrics on the assessment web page.
- Complete the report:
 - Data help reflect the experience of the students and can highlight areas of strength or of concern.
 - The sections on reflection are critical and close the loop on assessment. What had you intended to accomplish? Having reviewed the outcomes, what will you do differently to promote student learning and more fully meet the stated learning objectives? We should demonstrate how we are using data and other observations to improve student learning.
 - Send to Dean Bruce (who will send reminders in the last weeks of the term). If you are teaching multiple sections of the same course, you can combine the data and outcomes into a single report.
- Keep your document to assist you in preparing your next course that addresses the learning objective!