

Appendix B

University of Baltimore General Education Assessment

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consultation with the General Education
Council AY 2014-15
2013 to 2017 Plan

The General Education Program at the University of Baltimore (UB)

The University of Baltimore (UB) has always had General Education for upper division transfer students. These courses were determined by COMAR and UB learning goals within programs. Substantial modifications were begun in 2010 with full attention to redesign in 2012. At this time the General Education program moved from a cafeteria model of distribution to a curriculum focused on core competencies, values, and habits of mind that we want all students in our undergraduate program to experience.

Mission

The mission of the University of Baltimore General Education Program is to engage undergraduate students in the development of essential skills and competencies that will enable them to make knowledge work. Courses and experiential learning opportunities within this program prepare students to communicate effectively in many different modes; to gather, synthesize, and critically evaluate information; to make ethical and evidence-based decisions within real-world contexts; to understand systems and to think systemically; and to negotiate divergent and competing perspectives. Spanning the lower division and upper division and featuring high-impact educational practices, the program offers all UB students an integrative experience that transcends individual majors and helps fulfill University-wide learning goals.

Program Goals:

- UB students and faculty should articulate the value of General Education in the college-level learning experience by identifying General Education outcomes in all courses that are GE approved
- UB's General Education program is aligned with its institutional motto- "Knowledge that Works"
- UB's General Education program has a positive impact on recruitment, retention, and persistence towards degree completion
- Processes and policies surrounding General Education are reviewed for their accessibility to students
- The competencies established in the General Education program are coherently aligned to UB degree programs and to UB's strategic initiatives and directives (including mission, vision, UB 21, and the UB strategic plan)

General Education Vision Statement

The proposed revisions to the General Education Program encompass the COMAR requirements as well as specific University of Baltimore requirements. Together, this program is "uniquely UB" and for the purposes of discussion will be referred to as the "General Education Program." This model uses a skills and competency based structure, rather than a discipline-based structure

and was devised with attention to assessment needs as well as the definition of “Liberal Education” as defined by the AAC&U.¹

At UB a “skills and competency-based structure” is a structure that privileges students’ reading, writing, thinking, knowing, and doing—making knowledge work. The skills and competencies reflected in this program are drawn from the undergraduate learning goals and promote critical thinking and effective communication as well as the development of practical literacies and the integration of knowledge and experience. These competencies provide a foundation for the architecture of the General Education Program.

The primary motivations for a “uniquely UB” approach to General Education are:

- to provide a richer, fuller statement of requirements in a way that motivates individual students and provides a framework for a unification of academic areas particularly at the freshman and sophomore levels;
- to provide a rationale to all university stakeholders for these requirements;
- to cast all requirements in the context of the University Learning Goals—instead of relying upon a distributional studies paradigm—since these goals represent our contract, or agreement, with all undergraduate students;
- to allow the university to better articulate its programs to current and potential students;
- to encourage co-curricular activities;
- to prepare students for their majors by providing the fundamental building blocks of education and lifelong learning

The unique skills and competency based structure highlights:

- **Student Engagement:** focusing on skills and competencies, such as communication and critical thinking, rather than disciplines and requirements helps underscore the role of General Education as integral to the students’ education. These skills and competencies are directly connected to individual majors.
For example: “students will acquire and demonstrate mastery of X, Y, Z skills” replaces “students must take a course in X discipline unrelated to their major.”
- **Challenging Curriculum:** each of the General Education skills and competencies can and should develop over the course of a student’s academic career and beyond her/his

¹ AAC&U defines Liberal Education as “an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

The broad goals of liberal education have been enduring even as the courses and requirements that comprise a liberal education have changed over the years. Today, a liberal education usually includes a General Education curriculum that provides broad learning in multiple disciplines and ways of knowing, along with more in-depth study in a major” (AAC&U Liberal Education Resources: http://www.aacu.org/leap/what_is_liberal_education.cfm).

time at UB, and our program emphasizes their presence throughout the curriculum while promoting growth, rigor, and lifelong learning. Skills and competencies such as critical thinking and the development of a specific knowledge base can be scaffolded throughout the General Education Program and individual major.

For example: the Communication category includes specific courses on written and oral communication at both the lower division and upper division levels as well as disciplinary courses that further develop these skills.

- **Flexibility:** this model is flexible and accommodates our diverse student population. Students can enter the General Education Program at multiple points and still have a “uniquely UB” experience. In addition, the skills and competency-based model promotes multiple growth opportunities and delivery options, which connect to “knowledge that works” and enable students to further tailor their UB experience.
For example, a student may be able to use a study abroad experience to fulfill part of the “Global and Intercultural Knowledge” requirement.

A Competency Based General Education Program

The revision to the General Education Program was undertaken with the goal of integrating General Education across the four-year curriculum and updating the program to meet the needs of our diverse student body. The revision included both local and global changes—building on the existing structure and incorporating new elements. The new program is tied to UB’s unique academic identity and promotes a skills and competency based approach in which students are encouraged to apply knowledge.

Competencies go beyond learning outcomes to emphasize not only content and skill but also the level of mastery students are expected to obtain. As such, competency-based learning can be scaffolded throughout a student’s curriculum. In addition, competency-based learning addresses both the acquirement and application of learning. Finally, competencies are more objectively measurable than credit hours.²

Instead of simply listing courses that a student might take out of a “menu” of content areas, this revised framework begins with the end in mind: the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a UB graduate. In so doing, the framework taps into the larger shift in higher education from courses, and the accumulation of credits, to competencies---what Barr and Tagg (1995) describe as a movement from providing instruction to producing learning.³

Focusing on the learning necessitates that we first articulate our goals. In the face of pressing economic and social challenges, it is critical that UB graduates be able to communicate effectively in many different modes; to gather, synthesize, and critically evaluate information; to

² See also the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning Report, “Competency-Based Degree Programs in the U.S.”

³ Robert B. Barr and John Tagg, “From Teaching to Learning -A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education,” *Change* (Nov./Dec. 1995).

make ethical and evidence-based decisions within real-world contexts; to understand systems and to think systemically; and to negotiate divergent and competing perspectives.

Focusing on the learning also requires us to think differently about the curriculum. Rather than house a disconnected set of courses, UB General Education contains increasingly sophisticated opportunities for students to develop and test ideas, hone skills, develop a sense of purpose and commitment, and integrate and apply their knowledge to complex, real-world challenges. And when students move more squarely into their major fields of study, they should continue this process, bringing the significant questions, intellectual habits, and methods of the discipline into the mix.

The General Education skills and competency-based domain areas were developed to correspond with the UB undergraduate Learning Goals. Students achieve the competencies outlined in these category descriptions through skills developed in coursework that satisfies UB General Education Area learning objectives. Co-curricular experiences may also be used to fulfill competencies. These categories embody the unique UB General Education Program and enable engaged, flexible, and challenging learning. This program offers a foundation from which new modes of distribution, courses, and learning outcomes can be developed.

The new program also includes a Sophomore Seminar that forms a bridge from the student's point of entrance to her/his major.

Student Learning Outcomes

HUMANISTIC AND AESTHETIC THINKING

1. Comprehend, interpret, and analyze texts/artifacts and explain the distinctive ways in which ideas are communicated within a given discipline and the methodologies and tools used for that communication.
2. Compare and contrast the numerous factors and institutions that influence individuals, cultures, society, and the natural environment.
3. Discuss relevant aspects of the historical or cultural contexts from which ideas and ways of communicating emerge.

COMMUNICATION

1. Address a range of audiences effectively; develop and organize focused and coherent messages, and use verbal and visual rhetorical strategies for informing and persuading.
2. Acquire a critical disposition to thinking, reading, and writing; understand writing as a process; and increase competence in rhetorical conventions

For Speech/Oral Communication Requirement (3-8):

3. Identify the variables of the communication process
4. Select appropriate forms of verbal and nonverbal communication and proper channels of communication
5. Explain and use primary variables that affect oral delivery
6. Explain strategies for projecting confidence and decreasing anxiety
7. Identify obstacles to effective listening

8. Discuss issues relating to the ethical responsibilities of communicators

For Writing Requirement (9-11):

As they progress through UB's writing program course sequence students should

9. Acquire a critical disposition to thinking, reading, and writing
 - a. Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
 - b. Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate sources
 - c. Integrate their own ideas with those of others
10. Understand writing as a process
 - a. Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text
 - b. Develop strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proofreading texts
 - c. Use a variety of informational and research technologies
11. Increase competence in rhetorical conventions
 - a. Develop knowledge of genre conventions (structure, paragraphing, tone, mechanics)
 - b. Practice appropriate means of citation and documentation
 - c. Control surface features

CRITICAL THINKING AND ETHICAL REASONING

1. These courses will help students establish and develop critical thinking, analytical skills, and ethical reasoning across disciplines.

Ethical Reasoning (2-4)

2. Explain and apply ethical, economic and legal guidelines for the use of information
3. Explain and apply ethical models to evaluate the consequences and outcomes of various courses of action
4. Evaluate ethical frameworks and value systems and compare them to their own

Critical Thinking (5-9):

5. Articulate a need for information, evaluate the extent of that need, and identify sources or information required to meet that need
6. Develop and apply criteria in order to evaluate information and sources thereof.
7. Evaluate and interpret quantitative data and other structured information using analytical and visualization tools
8. Integrate key concepts from information collected into an existing body of knowledge
9. Apply this information to synthesize and present new knowledge

GLOBAL AND INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Demonstrate an understanding of global cultures and increased awareness about the relationship between global and local issues, and demonstrate understanding of root causes of social problems.
2. Compare and contrast the numerous factors and institutions that influence individuals, cultures, society, and the natural environment.
3. Describe and illustrate appropriate methodologies and questions used to explore social phenomena and to identify and evaluate solutions to personal, cultural, societal, national, and/or global problems.

4. Discuss relevant aspects of the historical or cultural contexts from which ideas and ways of communicating emerge.
5. Connect knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from an academic field/discipline to civic engagement and to one's own participation in civic life, politics, and government
6. Explain diverse positions, including those of different cultural, economic and geographic interests, on a civic issue.

For Courses meeting the COMAR Social Science requirement (7-8):

7. An understanding of the numerous factors and institutions that influence individuals, cultures, society, and the natural environment.
8. An understanding of the quantitative, qualitative, normative, and abstract models used to analyze past and/or present behavior of individuals, groups, institutions, and societies to identify and evaluate solutions to personal, cultural, societal, national, and/or global problems

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

1. Develop and practice research skills, technological fluency, teamwork, and financial literacy and understand the importance of these skills for work and life.

Research Skills (2 & 3)

2. Develop effective search strategies and revise the search strategies as needed
3. Access sources of information and manage the collection of information

Technological Fluency (4-6)

4. Explain the basic principles underlying the function of modern information resources, such as computers, networks, and software tools
5. Explain the process of constant innovation that characterizes information technology, requiring critical evaluation of new developments, adaptation of existing practices, and anticipation of change
6. Create and structure documents with hypertext links and graphics in a range of formats, including conventional page presentation as well as screen presentation using appropriate software

Teamwork (7-9)

7. Develop and practice teamwork skills and collaborate in shared in-person activities as well as activities using the internet and other digital services
8. Develop leadership skills through instruction in group dynamics and participation in a variety of group roles
9. Collaborate with others in developing and implementing an approach to a civic issue, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the process, and where applicable, the result

Financial Literacy (10 & 11)

10. Explain and analyze the personal and societal consequences of financial decisions
11. Describe the principles of money management

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE THINKING

1. Discuss major and fundamental concepts, theories, models, and issues within the field of study using scientific inquiry and/or mathematical models.

For Science Requirement (2-6)

2. Discriminate science from non-science, especially including the attribute of testing of hypotheses about natural phenomena through observation.

3. Technology, data collection, and quantitative methods:
 - a. Name and describe technology and data collection and quantitative methods commonly used in the field of study. [non-laboratory courses]
 - b. Apply technology and data collection and quantitative methods commonly used in the field of study. [laboratory courses]
4. Access scientific information on an assigned topic from specified internet and other sources.
5. Make judgments about conclusions reached from data obtained in peer-reviewed and other scientific investigations of natural phenomena.
6. Define the fundamental terminology and concepts and identify the significant historic figures in the field of study.

For Math Requirement (7-13):

7. Interpret mathematical models given verbally, or by formulas, graphs, tables, or schematics, and draw inferences from them;
8. Represent mathematical concepts verbally, and where appropriate, symbolically, visually, or numerically;
9. Use arithmetic, algebraic, geometric, technological, or statistical methods to solve problems;
10. Use mathematical reasoning to solve problems, to formulate and test conjectures, to judge the validity of arguments, to formulate valid arguments, and to communicate the reasoning and the results
11. Estimate and check answers to mathematical problems in order to determine reasonableness
12. Apply mathematical and statistical tools in solving problems of business, science, or the social sciences.
13. Access existing structured information, and create original data structures using a database system.

For Social Science courses (14-15):

14. An understanding of the numerous factors and institutions that influence individuals, cultures, society, and the natural environment.
15. An understanding of the quantitative, qualitative, normative, and abstract models used to analyze past and/or present behavior of individuals, groups, institutions, and societies to identify and evaluate solutions to personal, cultural, societal, national, and/or global problems.

The University of Baltimore General Education Assessment Plan is built on the following best practices:

- On-going curricular and programmatic review of quality of General Education courses
- Opportunities to expand and explore delivery options for General Education courses
- Integration of signature learning experiences across the General Education curriculum
- Benchmarks and key performance indicators aligned with institutional mission, vision, and values

Accomplishments, Timeline and Deliverables indicating General Education (GE)

Effectiveness:

The MSCHE Periodic Program Review was submitted on June 1st, 2012 and during this same summer UB launched the faculty led work groups that addressed General Education. Much has been accomplished in the past two years and much has been learned.

- **The General Education Program was redesigned as a competencies-based model still consistent with Code of Maryland (COMAR). Activities related to the redesign were:**
 - Creating new labels for organizing the curriculum
 - Mapping existing UB GE courses to competencies
 - Revising existing and adding new learning goals to address competencies in each dispositional area
 - Revising processes and paperwork for recertification of existing GE courses
 - Creating the process for approving new GE courses in the new model
 - Designing a Sophomore Seminar with signature common read program
 - Implementing a required capstone in all UB undergraduate majors
 - Faculty training and development in best practices in General Education delivery
 - Drafting an assessment plan for learning outcomes
 - Initial assessment of WRIT 300

AY 2013-14 saw many outputs from the academic year and the work groups of summer 2013. Further development of General Education processes and initiatives led to:

- **Further development of General Education processes and initiatives led to:**
 - Development of a General Education Mission statement
 - Appointment of a Director of General Education with course release time (begun fall 2014)
 - Development of a General Education website and clear guidance for advisors on the implementation of the plan
 - Review of syllabi and mapping of student learning outcomes (appendix)
 - Finalized the design, identified faculty and provided training to offer twelve sections of the Sophomore Seminar fall 2014. This course includes a common syllabus (appendix) with student learning outcomes, learning opportunities and identified assessments and will be used as a pilot for all General Education courses. Included in this course is a common read and signature writing assignment and writing assessment (appendix). Approved by the University Faculty Senate
 - Development of an enhanced set of common goals for capstone courses to add more rigor and continuity across the entirety of a student's undergraduate experience. Approved by the University Faculty Senate. (appendix)
 - Building upon and revision of the General Education Assessment Plan

- Revised General Education courses Revised General Education courses; created a credit-bearing WRIT 100 to replace noncredit-bearing developmental courses DVRW 090 and 095; and revised WRIT 300
- Began the process of closer examination of General Education courses and redesign courses for optimal student learning
- Marketing information about new GE architecture communicated campus-wide, included in marketing, on website and reflected in the updates to the undergraduate catalog

As a result of our 2013 summer work group that assessed WRIT 300 and what we have learned in our work in the AY 2013-14, it became clear that we needed to revisit some of the fundamental elements of General Education. For example, some the artifacts collected for assessment of WRIT 300 did not include prompts that elicited the kinds of writing to be assessed. Upon further examination, even if the student learning outcomes were listed, in some cases there may not have been sufficient learning opportunities to develop the skill.

Also, in a course mapping activity in spring 2014, courses with multiple sections such as WRIT 100 and WRIT 300 did not have common outcomes. This caused us to stop and pause, to reexamine our certification process, and revisit all course syllabi. Finally, as we attempted to implement our assessment at the program and course level, and from feedback as a result of visit from staff at AAC& U, it became clear that our student learning outcomes in General Education were too complex, leading to confusion and challenges in assessment. Thus, while it may appear that we are not as far along as we would like, this testing of our outcomes and assessment process has lead us to reexamine our work in a thoughtful and thorough way. Our timeline begins with the summer of 2014 and take us to 2016-17 at the time our MSCHE Self Study is due.

Phase	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Status
1	Writing Program Revision including WRIT 100 and 300 to reflect common outcomes and assessment plan	Summer 2013	University Writing Director	completed
2	GEC curriculum mapping- course domain and learning outcomes matrix.	Summer 2014	Coordinated with Associate Provost and GEC	completed
3	GEC review General Education outcomes for logic and clarity	AY2014-2015	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
6	GEC review outcomes with goal to return to UFS for approved revisions	AY 2014-15	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
7	GEC review of course syllabi and refer back to department if needed	AY 2014-15	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
8	IRB-approved qualitative study of high impact practices within UB first-year experience	AY 2014-15	Coordinated with Provost's Office and CAS	In progress

Phase	Action	Timeline	Responsibility	Status
9	GEC revise the course proposal process to include evidence of alignment of course goals and GE goals in syllabi	Fall 2014	Coordinated with Associate Provost and GEC	
10	GEC develop a cycle of assessment for all competencies over a five year period	Fall 2014	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	In progress See below
11	Offer Sophomore Seminar with Common Read – collect signature writing assignment in Freshman Seminar, Sophomore Seminar and WRIT 300 and Capstone assess	Fall 2014	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
11	Assessment of writing across Freshman Seminar, Sophomore Seminar, WRIT 300 and Capstone	Spring 2015	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
	Solicit new courses to address gaps or overlaps in mapping	Spring 2015	Schools/Colleges Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
12	Make changes to Writing in Freshman Seminar, Sophomore Seminar, WRIT 300 and Capstone as needed.	Summer 2015	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
13	GEC evaluates the effectiveness of the restructured General Education Program from mid-summer to fall 2015.	Fall 2015	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
14	GEC creates assessment benchmarks for capstone courses and sophomore seminar; makes recommendations for modifications to the program and engages in gap analysis resulting in action plan for identification of needs in course development, course design and redesign, staffing and resources and communicates findings and plan to the UB community.	Summer 2016	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
15	Engage community in a SWOT analysis of GEN ED. Recommend enhancements	AY 2016-17	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC	
16	Proposed revisions to UB General Education Curriculum if recommended	AY 2016-17	Coordinated with Associate Provost, CELTT and GEC And University Faculty	

General Education (GE) Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan

Direct Measures and Indirect Measures*

GE Domain	Assess 2013-14	Assess 2014-15	Assess 2015-16	Assess 2016-17	Assess 2017-18	Assess 2018-19
HUMANISTIC AND AESTHETIC THINKING						X
COMMUNICATION	X	X				
CRITICAL THINKING AND ETHICAL REASONING			X			
GLOBAL AND INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE				X		
PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS				X		
QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE THINKING					X	
FRESHMAN SEMINAR				X		
SOPHOMORE SEMINAR			X			
WRITING PROGRAM		X				
CAPSTONE PROGRAM					X	

***DIRECT MEASURES WILL INCLUDE BUT NOT LIMITED TO GCE REVIEW OF STUDENT ARTIFACTS USING RUBRICS**

*INDIRECT MEASURES AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Instrument	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
CIRP: Cooperative Institutional Research Program		X		X		X	
YFCY: Your First College Year		X		X		X	
NSSE/LSSE/FSSE: Surveys of Student Engagement			X		X		X
CSS: College Senior Survey		X		X		X	
COACHE: Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education							
UB-developed surveys							
Student Success	X		X		X		X

Please refer to the Institutional Assessment Plan for Student Learning, Appendix A, for examples of work, including, the sophomore seminar syllabus template, a signature writing sample for the common read and to the General Education website for forms and procedures for course certification.