

General Education Assessment training event
January 3rd, 2008
NOTES

COMMUNICATION

29 faculty attended this session (note: math department excused from morning session due to previously scheduled departmental assessment meeting).

Using the Communication rubric, faculty assessed 2007 Capstone Artifact #18 with the following results:

Outcome #	1 (Limited)	2 (Adequate)	3 (Proficient)	4 (Exceptional)
1		18	5	
2	4	16	2	1
3	11	9	2	
4	10	9	4	
5	6	16	2	

Issues:

- How to know whether a student is using their own words or someone else's
- Not clear where to put rating for organization of overall paper (even though organization of individual paragraphs is clear)
- Overall thesis and purpose (or unification of paper) is "big hole" in rubric
- Lack of agreement among raters about what makes a good paragraph
- Difficult to use rubric when there is a lack of evidence (i.e., use of computer databases vs. "hard" sources; not always easy to tell what research methods were used)
- Rubrics doesn't necessarily address plagiarism; instructors don't necessarily use the same methods to assess plagiarism
- Problematic that research method cited in #3 is electronic; what if someone does a fantastic job "the old fashioned way" (i.e. using "hard sources")
- In #3, proficient and exceptional are about understanding the material, not about using the computer – somewhat confusing
- Item #4 – possible split out into two areas: credible evidence and support arguments (too many different variables to assess at once)
- Item #5 – how is the word "diverse" defined here? We know capstone courses deal with more than one discipline, but are papers required to do the same? This isn't clear. Also, there is some confusion about whether to focus on diverse sources vs. comprehension of material.

Action Plans/Ideas:

- Ensure that students who need English 100 take it (change cut scores).
- Establish writing across the curriculum to reinforce what is learned in English 101 and 102 in other courses.
- Encourage students to utilize writing lab; could require that students take in at least one draft per class.
- Utilize more learning communities to encourage students to build writing skills.
- Reconsider the capstone experience, including developing some basic criteria (or minimum expectations) for capstone papers. Make sure we are emphasizing the “synthesis” process adequately. Talk about what kind of research and writing should be happening at the sophomore level. Think about whether it’s really helping students to teach blended capstone/non-capstone courses. Reconsider alternative approaches to capstone, such as the two quarter approach (five credits of discipline followed by two credits of research and writing).
- Encourage students to do more research; possibly add 2-credit library research class to graduation requirements. Both library and library class are underutilized resources.
- Provide professional development workshops for faculty on how to teach and evaluate writing (could be part of writing across the curriculum effort).
- Add English 101 as a prerequisite to more courses.
- Give reading skills more attention—if students can’t read, they can’t write. Reading itself does not even appear on the gen ed outcome list. This is an oversight that should be rectified. We also need to take actions to integrate more reading throughout the curriculum—this should be reinforced by using quizzes, writing assignments, etc., that involve different sources of reading material including primary sources. At some colleges, freshmen are required to take an introductory class in critical reading. This is something we could consider.
- Emphasize items number one and five as we develop our strategies (they are the areas that appear to be most in need of improvement).
- Reconsider rewriting the research outcome to include “hard sources” in addition to electronic databases.
- Reconsider the “cornerstone” concept. The entry experience has been discussed in the past, but was never implemented. Book seminars could be included in this concept.
- Utilize our sub-100 reading courses fully.

PROBLEM SOLVING

33 faculty attended this session.

Using the Problem Solving rubric, faculty assessment 2007 Capstone Artifact #6 with the following results:

Outcome #	1 (Limited)	2 (Adequate)	3 (Proficient)	4 (Exceptional)
1	15	9	2	
2	11	10	3	
3	17	11		
4	26			

Issues:

- How do the terms: logical, rational, ethical, and coherent differ? Consider removing the word “rational” from the outcome.
- Item #1 – different levels of criteria are inconsistent with one another.
- Difficult to apply the label “adequate” in some cases, even though the box fit. Consider moving all definitions over (adequate becomes limited, proficient becomes adequate, etc.)
- Not clear whether all capstone papers demonstrate problem solving (theoretically yet, but in reality, maybe not)
- How are historical (or other) inaccuracies addressed? Consider revising item #2 to read, “...systematically collect relevant and accurate...”
- Item #3; again, there are problems with the “adequate” label even though the box fits. Consider moving them all down a level (adequate should be limited).
- Papers seem to be in draft, rather than final, form. This could be related to the 10-week quarter; perhaps this is too short to learn a discipline and produce a quality capstone paper. We need to develop a format that will help prepare students to become juniors in college.
- Very important for students to get feedback on drafts of papers; this should be a requirement. Requiring outlines might help students get organized.
- Capstone assignments don’t seem consistent.
- Do we have to have the different levels (scale of 1 to 4) defined? Couldn’t we just give a rating of 1 to 4 without the labels and definitions?

Action Plans/Ideas:

- Develop strategies to help students overcome their apathy. This could include mandating conferences with instructors, mandating due dates for drafts of papers, requiring feedback sessions, turning in papers in sections throughout quarter, etc.
- Revisit the proposal to offer capstone in a two-quarter format (5 credits in discipline followed by 2 credits of research and writing). This would give students 20 rather than 10 weeks to develop their project and produce a culminating paper.
- Consider blending other student work (besides capstone papers) into general education assessment project.
- Update gen ed curriculum maps using new common course numbers.
- Share gen ed rubrics with students.
- Consider changes to rubric (see "issues").