General Education Assessment
General Education Reports

Approved by Faculty, November 29, 2005

Proposal for General Education Assessment Program from the Institutional Effectiveness Committee

Background

All major accrediting and credentialing agencies require strong evidence that the University engages in detailed evaluation of its academic programs and academic support programs. For example, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), American Chemical Society (ACS), Masters in Psychology Accreditation Council (MPAC), National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), and National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) all require in-depth evaluations of the programs they accredit. All of our programs in those fields are accredited. The University developed, and has maintained, evaluation of individual academic programs over the past 10 years in compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) standards for institutional effectiveness. The program evaluations are provided to the Office of Institutional Research each year as Institutional Effectiveness reports.

Evaluation of the University's general education program is also required by SACS standards. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) has reviewed the numerous methods that are used to evaluate general education and recommends the following procedures for assessment of the University's general education program.

Overview

Evaluation Control: Faculty versus University

The primary control over program evaluation can be centered in an office of assessment or be faculty driven. In most programs, driven by assessment offices, a broad-based measure of cognitive abilities and knowledge is used, e.g. the College BASE exam from ETS. Faculty-driven processes generally make more use of evaluative procedures designed by departments to assess their contribution to meeting specific general education goals. Given the history of the University in using a faculty-driven process in evaluation of academic programs, the Committee recommends extending that approach to the assessment of general education.

Methods of Assessment: Standardized Exams versus Criterion-referenced Measures

It is always optimal to use a standardized evaluative exam with proven reliability and validity that provides national and regional normative samples. However, in assessing the University's general education program, use of such an exam is problematic given the established psychometric standards. Specifically, we would need a content-based exam to assess the overall program. With a content-based exam the primary requirement is the construction of a test that is directly tied to the domains to be measured. To meet the basic standards of psychometric theory we would need to find a test designed to assess each of the domains specified in the University's eleven goals for general education. The Committee is in agreement that no such test exists and that the cost of developing such a test is prohibitive. Thus, the Committee recommends use of goal-specific criterion-referenced measures developed by faculty in the disciplines that hold primary responsibility for teaching in certain goal areas.

Processes in Assessment of General Education Program

The proposed assessment program for general education combines several distinct assessment activities, some of which are currently used on campus and some of which will be developed specifically for the assessment program. These activities can be divided into three groups: 1) assessment of specific skills, 2) student and faculty evaluation of non-specific goals, 3) peer assessment of program design and management.

Committee Responsibilities (See Appendix A)

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee will be responsible for coordinating all general education assessment activities, including collecting IE reports from academic departments and preparing a summary report of assessments of general education goals.

The University's Academic Affairs Committee will be responsible for evaluating the summary report provided by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and determining whether the goals of the General Education Program are met. If the Academic Affairs Committee decides that a goal or goals are not met, then it refers these concerns to the appropriate school or department for response or action.

Assessment of Specific Skills

The assessment of skills specifically tied to the general education goals approved by the faculty in December 1995 will be completed through a series of activities coordinated by the various individual academic departments or programs. This facet of the program will be entirely under the control of the academic disciplines. The assessment of these skills will be included in either a separate institutional effectiveness report or be distinctly incorporated in a discipline's current institutional effectiveness report. For example, the Department of English assessment of competence in written English is already a yearly part of the department's annual institutional effectiveness report. While the basic method used for each assessment activity will be subject to review by the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and reported to the Academic Affairs Committee, control of the details used to assess a specific skill goal resides with the departments. Details of procedures will be included in the report given to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee by the departments. Data from each assessment will be reported for decisive evaluation by the departments and the Academic Affairs Committee.

1) English Composition Portfolio Evaluation. Department of English, Modern

Languages and Philosophy.

Goal 1: The ability to write and speak English clearly, logically, creatively, and effectively Goal 2: The ability to read and listen with understanding and comprehension

Goal 3: The ability to locate, organize, document, present, and use information and ideas

2) Public Speaking Evaluation. Department of Mass Communications.

Goal 1: The ability to write and speak English clearly, logically, creatively, and effectively

Goal 2: The ability to read and listen with understanding and comprehension

3) Mathematical Skills Evaluation. Department of Mathematics.

Goal 6: An understanding of fundamental mathematical principles and the skills to apply them

4) Computer Competency Evaluation. School of Business.

Goal 7: The ability to use computers for acquiring, processing, and analyzing information

5) Scientific Reasoning Evaluation. Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Psychology.

Goal 8: An understanding of the natural world and the ability to apply scientific principles to reach conclusions

Goal 11: The ability to reason logically and think critically in order to improve problem solving skills and the ability to make informed and responsible choices

Student/Faculty Evaluations of Goal Attainment (See Appendix B)

Because several of the general education goals do not lend themselves to skills-based or outcomes-based assessment, and because the hasty implementation of such assessment procedures could eventually weaken the general education program, the Committee recommends that surveys be used to supplement the assessment of generalized goals. More specifically, the proposed surveys will measure how well the general education program prepares students for upper-division course work. The surveys will be distributed each semester to graduating seniors and to faculty members who teach upper-level courses. Students and faculty will be asked to rate the adequacy of education in each of the following goals: Goal 4: An understanding of the cultural heritages of the United States and a knowledge of the language or literature of another country

Goal 5: An understanding of artistic processes and products

Goal 7: The ability to use computers for acquiring, processing, and analyzing information

Goal 9: An understanding of the diverse influences which have shaped the development of civilization and which affect individual and collective human behavior

Goal 10: An understanding of the governing structures and operations of the United States including rights and responsibilities of its citizens

Goal 11: The ability to reason logically and think critically in order to improve problem solving skills and the ability to make informed and responsible choice
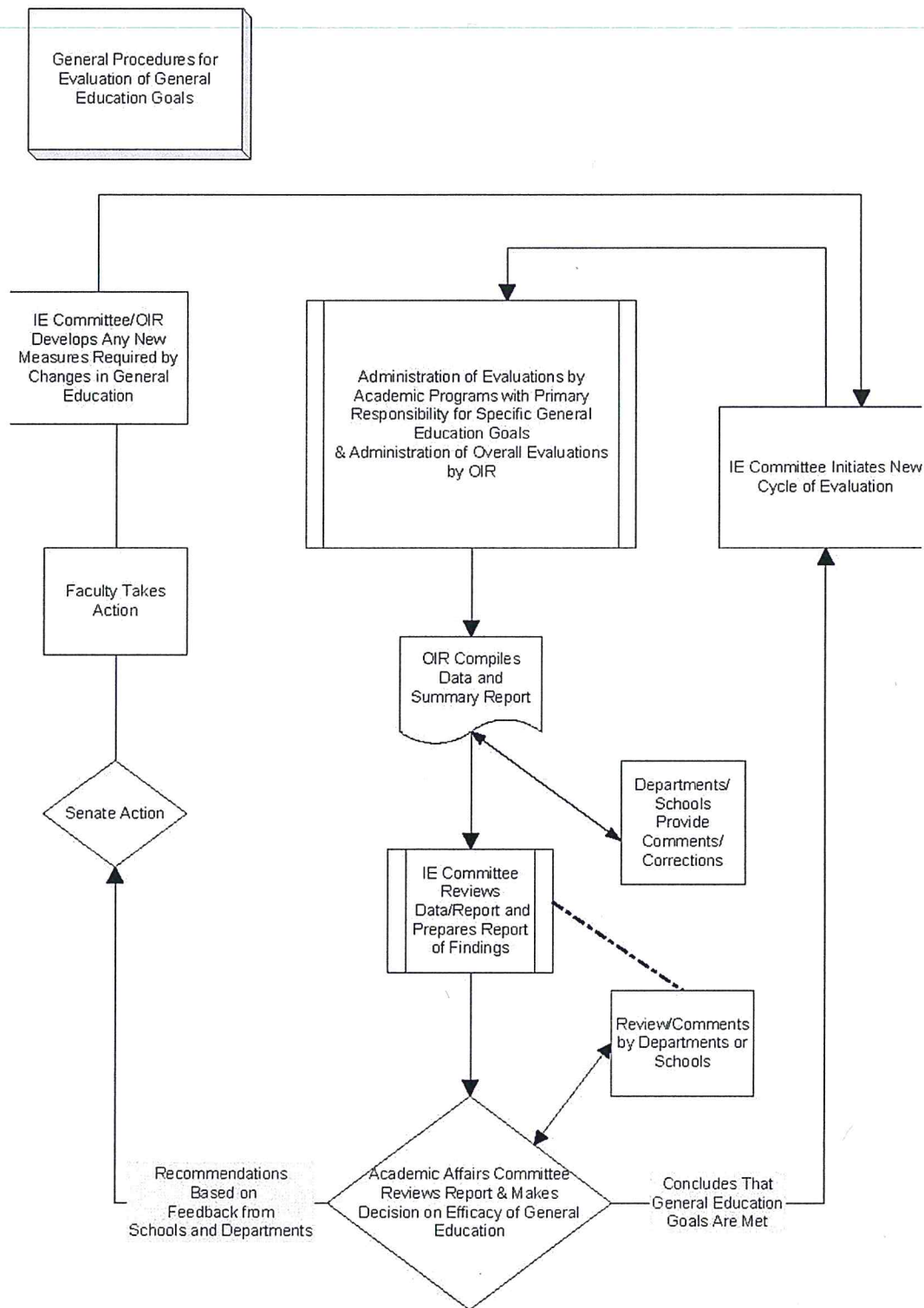
The surveys to assess student achievement in these areas are attached as Appendix B. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee will prepare a summary of these evaluations to be included in the yearly report to the Academic Affairs Committee.

Peer Assessment of Program Design and Management

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee, in consultation with the Provost, will coordinate periodic reviews of the General Education Program by assembling a team of evaluators from institutions comparable to FMU, which will review the design and management of the General Education Program. These evaluators will offer a narrative summary of the strengths and weaknesses they find in the program. This summary will be included in the yearly report to the Academic Affairs Committee.

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Appendix A: Flow Chart for Process of General Education Assessment

General Procedures for Evaluation of General Education Goals

IE Committee/OIR Develops Any New Measures Required by Changes in General Education

Administration of Evaluations by Academic Programs with Primary Responsibility for Specific General Education Goals & Administration of Overall Evaluations by OIR

IE Committee Initiates New Cycle of Evaluation

Faculty Takes Action

OIR Compiles Data and Summary Report

Departments/ Schools Provide Comments/ Corrections

Senate Action

IE Committee Reviews Data/Report and Prepares Report of Findings

Review/Comments by Departments or Schools

Recommendations Based on Feedback from Schools and Departments

Academic Affairs Committee Reviews Report & Makes Decision on Efficacy of General Education

Concludes That General Education Goals Are Met

Appendix B: Graduating Senior and Faculty Survey

Senior Exit Survey

Each spring and fall, graduating seniors will be asked to complete the following survey:

Here is a set of statements about your experiences as a student at FMU. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Disagree strongly	Disagree moderately	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor	Agree a little	Agree moderately	Agree strongly

1	2	3	disagree 4	5	6	7

1. _____My general education courses gave me an understanding of the cultural heritages of the United States and a knowledge of the language or literature of another country.

(Goal 4)

1 _____My general education courses gave me an understanding of artistic processes and products. (Goal 5)

2 _____My general education courses helped me learn to use computers for acquiring, processing, and analyzing information. (Goal 7)

3 _____My general education courses gave me an understanding of the diverse influences which have shaped the development of civilization and which affect individual and collective human behavior (Goal 9).

4 _____My general education courses gave me an understanding of the governing structures and operations of the United States, including the rights and responsibilities of its citizens (Goal 10).

5 _____My general education courses gave me the ability to reason logically and think critically in order to improve problem solving skills and the ability to make informed and responsible choices. (Goal 11)

Faculty Evaluation Survey

Each year the faculty will be asked to rate each of the following statements: Please use the following scale to evaluate the accuracy of each of

these statements:

Disagree strongly	Disagree moderately	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree moderately	Agree strongly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1 _____The general education courses give my students an understanding of the cultural heritages of the United States and a knowledge of the language or literature of another country. (Goal 4)

2 _____The general education courses give my students an understanding of artistic processes and products. (Goal 5)

3 _____The general education courses help my students learn to use computers for acquiring, processing, and analyzing information. (Goal 7)

4 _____The general education courses give my students an understanding of the diverse influences which have shaped the development of civilization and which affect individual and collective human behavior. (Goal 9)

5 _____The general education courses give my students an understanding of the governing structures and operations of the United States, including the rights and responsibilities of its citizens. (Goal 10)

6 _____The general education courses give my students the ability to reason logically and think critically in order to improve problem solving skills and the ability to make informed and responsible choices. (Goal 11)

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