2011-2012 General Education
Summary Assessment Report
(updated to align with UAC Template)

I. Overview

The UGEC is convened by the Dean of Letters & Science (which serves as the “Trustee” for University General Education) and reports to the University Academic Planning Council. The UGEC administers the university-wide General Education Requirements (GER), including the assessment of student learning in those requirements. In years past, an ad hoc assessment subcommittee, the General Education Assessment Council (GEAC) planned and designed most of the assessment studies undertaken in this area. Student learning is frequently discussed in the committee’s regular meetings, rather than delegated to a subcommittee (though subgroups manage most details related to assessment). Members engage in lively discussion of studies, outcomes, and policy implications arising from results.

Professor and Director of Testing and Evaluation Services James Wollack serves as the Research Director for General Education assessment. L&S provides substantial support for the administration of the GER curriculum. Professors David Zimmerman (English) and Gloria Mari-Beffa (Math) serve as campus-wide Communication and Quantitative Reasoning Liaisons (respectively). Professor Sissel Schroeder (Anthropology) chaired the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee in 2011-12; Professor Hemant Shah (Journalism and Mass Communication) will assume that responsibility in 2012-13. The liaisons and the ES Subcommittee consult with faculty about courses proposed to meet the Communication, ESR, and QR requirements; they advise faculty, staff, and students across campus concerning requests for exceptions, etc.; and finally, they serve as ex officio members of the UGEC and, when required, on various assessment project committees. In addition, staff in the College of Letters & Science help administer the UGER program: Assistant Dean Elaine Klein serves as the Director of the program and Curricular Administration Specialist Kimbrin Cornelius helps gather and analyze data and record student exceptions.

II. General Education Assessment Activities, 2011-2012

Since 2003, the University General Education Committee (UGEC) has used a formally adopted long-range Assessment Plan to guide campus-level efforts to understand the impact and efficacy of the General Education Requirements to facilitate student learning in key areas. Assessment activities leverage faculty interest and expertise, with priority given to projects likely to have a high impact and which can be readily conducted within available resources. The following section summarizes 2011-2012 assessment projects that have been completed, are under way, or are in the planning stage. For more information on these projects, please consult the full reports available on the University General Education Requirements website: http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/AssessmentReports.htm.

A. FOCUS: Communication Part A Requirement

LEARNING OUTCOME: With respect to the "writing" element that is one of the four modes of literacy taught in Comm A courses (writing, speaking, reading & listening), student work will show evidence of the following abilities related to writing: Selecting, narrowing, and focusing topics; Identifying and analyzing audience information needs; Generating and organizing ideas; Comprehending and analyzing texts; Learning structures of exposition and argument & the use of evidence; Organizing and developing paragraphs, papers, and speeches; Adapting writing and speaking for intended audiences; Learning conventions of academic writing; Mastering elements
of grammar, usage, and style; Revising and editing essays for spelling, punctuation, grammar, style, organization, and logic.

**ASSESSMENT STRATEGY:** Systematic examination of artifacts of student learning by independent raters trained to apply a rubric.

**KEY FINDINGS:** As a “proof of concept” study, the GEAC learned that this strategy can be used to directly examine artifacts of student learning. Though sample sizes were too small to justify any policy changes, tentative conclusions can be drawn: efforts to place students appropriately seem to be working and the Comm A course requirement seems to have the effect of improving student learning, if only to bring Comm A students to a level consistent with students not required to take Comm A. The UGEC will communicate these tentative findings to advisors and with the Office of Admissions.

**SUMMARY REPORT:** In partnership with the Center for the First-Year Experience and the instructors of Counseling Psychology 125, “A Wisconsin Experience Seminar,” the General Education Assessment Committee, under the leadership of Professor Jim Wollack, continued its work on the Communication-A pilot study, which is the first attempt to directly assess student learning in Communication-A; the research artifacts were produced in Fall 2010 and evaluated in Spring 2011; and the initial analysis of the data was completed in Fall 2011.

In Spring 2011, writing assignments in Counseling Psychology 125 were collected and reviewed. This course includes students across the university as well as students with different characteristics relative to Comm A - students who were required to take, and enrolled in, Comm A; students required to take, but not enrolled in, a Comm A course; and students who were exempt from the requirement. Writing samples were collected at a mid-point (8th week) and again at the end of the semester. Using a rubric designed by the Comm A Subcommittee, a group of trained raters evaluated these samples and rated on a numeric scale indicating how well the students’ work aligned with learning outcomes associated with the written communication goals articulated for Comm A courses. The findings from the study were mixed, with small sample sizes affecting the degree to which the effect might be considered significant; nevertheless, the results found a few statistically significant effects:

- At the beginning of the semester, writing samples produced by students who were exempt from Comm A had significantly higher scores than those produced by non-exempt students.
- At the end of the semester, writing samples produced by non-exempt students who were enrolled in a Comm A course were not statistically different from samples of writing produced by students who were exempt.
- At the end of the semester, writing samples produced by non-exempt students who were not enrolled in a Comm A course were statistically different (with lower scores) from those who had taken a Comm A course.

These findings suggest that efforts to place students appropriately are working and that the Comm A course requirement has an effect on student learning, if only to bring students up to a level consistent with students who were not required to take the course. However, when attempting to evaluate “learning gains” by comparing the first and second writing samples produced by students required to take Comm A and who were in a Comm A course, to samples from students required to take Comm A who were not enrolled in a Comm A course, there was no statistically significant difference. Given the strength of the effects noted above, where differences were observed, we suspect that the limitations of the study are clouding the results:
the small sample size, the short period between first and second writing assignments, and the
difference in nature of the assignments could make it difficult to discern change over time.

Given the size of the sample and study limitations, the General Education Assessment
Committee and Comm A Subcommittee would be reluctant to make broad policy
recommendations based on this study, were any such recommendations suggested by the
results. Overall, however, the results seem to be reassuring, and there were no alarming
findings to suggest that writing instruction in Comm A requires intervention. Given budget
constraints, resources required to repeat this study on a larger scale with better controls on the
nature and timing of writing samples, and the likelihood that little new information would be
gained from the investment, the Comm A Subcommittee recommends that further study of the
writing component of Comm A can safely be postponed.

Finally, as a proof-of-study concept study, this project has already proven useful. Many of the
lessons learned in this study have been applied to the design of the ongoing project to assess
student learning in the Ethnic Studies Requirement.

B. **FOCUS:** Comm A Information Literacy

**LEARNING OUTCOME:** In Comm A, students will acquire information seeking skills and
strategies, specifically, “identifying and retrieving source materials needed to evaluate, organize,
and select information from print and electronic sources” and “acquiring basic critical, technical,
and mechanical skills needed to find relevant information”.

**ASSESSMENT STRATEGY:** Focus groups conducted with Comm A course instructors to gauge
relevance of current learning outcomes.

**KEY FINDINGS:** The language used to describe information literacy outcomes reflects an
outdated understanding of this skill. Revisions to the language were recommended, and were
approved by the University Academic Planning Council in June 2012.

**SUMMARY REPORT:** From their inception, the General Education Requirements have reflected
the need for students to learn what the original authors described as “information seeking skills
and strategies”. The faculty (in 1992-94) perceived these skills to be essential for student
success at the modern research university, and located those skills in the Comm A and B
requirements, since they are important aspects of effective communication. However, the
language used to describe those skills and strategies is dated. The first step in updating the
online Computerized Library User Education (CLUE) module (which complements the required
Comm A library instruction session) focuses on updating that language.

Although the current “information seeking skills and strategies” learning outcomes have served
the campus well over the last two decades, they were written at the dawn of a significant
transformation of the information environment. The proposed language focuses on enduring
intellectual and practical skills that equip students to be effective in an environment that will
continue to change rapidly. References to technologies and delivery mechanisms (e.g. print
article index, scholarly article) have been eliminated, and the underlying goal of developing
higher-order knowledge, skills and abilities needed to navigate a changing environment (which
was implicit in the original language) is emphasized instead. The proposed language has been
vetted with the Library’s Communication A Working Group and the Comm A Subcommittee of
the University General Education Committee (some of whom participated in drafting the original
language). The process was discussed throughout the year with the University General
Education Committee, which concurred with the principle that the outdated language is less useful than it could be, and may impede effective assessment of these outcomes. We believe that the proposed updates effectively modernize the language and help us reframe “information seeking skills and strategies” as the tools needed to develop “information literacy”; the updates have been submitted for discussion and approval by the UAPC. If this change is approved, the next step will be to update the required Computerized Library User Education (CLUE) module of the Comm A and to evaluate its effectiveness. Given the significant number of students who satisfy the Comm A requirement through AP/IB test credit, placement testing and course transfer, the UGEC and Library Information Literacy Instruction group hope eventually to evaluate the impact CLUE has on students’ ability to understand and execute information-literacy-related tasks. Before an assessment of CLUE can be undertaken, however, the program requires a few updates.

C. **FOCUS: Ethnic Studies Requirement (ESR)**

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** (1) Awareness of History’s Impact on the Present – Students in ESR courses learn how certain histories have been valued and devalued, and how these differences have promulgated disparities in contemporary American society. (2) Ability to Recognize and Question Assumptions – Students in ESR courses are able to apply critical thinking skills with respect to harboring a healthy skepticism towards knowledge claims, whether in the form of media, political, or popular representations, primarily as these relate to race and ethnicity; they question their own assumptions and preconceived notions on these topics. (3) A Consciousness of Self and Other – Students in ESR courses learn to be aware of and empathetic toward the perspectives of others; they think about identity issues, including their own identity, as well as the connections they might have to people “outside” their focused social circle.

**ASSESSMENT STRATEGY:** (1) Systematic examination of artifacts of student learning by independent raters trained to apply a rubric. (2) Survey of student attitudes and perceptions related to race and ethnicity.

**KEY FINDINGS:** This study is still in progress.

**Summary of work to date:** The General Education Assessment Committee, working with the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee of the UGEC and with the faculty who teach courses that meet the ESR, is engaged in a three-part project to better understand student learning in ESR courses with respect to learning outcomes that were developed by ESR faculty in 2010. The Human Subject Institutional Review Board approved the protocol in February 2012, and two elements of this research project are actively under way:

(1) Review of “artifacts of student learning” produced in ESR courses, to evaluate how student learning aligns with the goals of the requirement.
   - ESR faculty were contacted, informed about the project, and have volunteered their courses for participation.
   - Student consent to participate in the study is complete and artifacts have been collected from students who provided consent.
   - On April 27, 2012, the ES faculty met to discuss and begin development of a rubric that will be used by a panel of raters (likely graduate students who teach ESR sections or who study topics appropriate to ESR) who will be trained to review artifacts using the developed rubric. In June and July 2012, a subcommittee if ES faculty met to further refine and test the rubric.
On August 15 and 16, a panel of Instructional Specialists reviewed the artifacts, using the rubric. The data are currently being analyzed.

(2) Survey of students to discern “attitudinal impacts” of the ESR that may contribute to students’ personal growth and affect campus climate (as specified in Faculty Legislations governing the ESR).

- The survey was developed in consultation with social science faculty who specialize in survey research.
- The sample was developed in consultation with the Office of the Registrar.
- The survey has been administered and analysis will be conducted in Fall 2012.

A third aspect of the study, analysis of campus-wide survey data (National Survey of Student Engagement) to evaluate student attitudes toward diversity relative to peer institutions will be conducted in Fall 2012.

This study represents a significant undertaking which we hope will inform the campus conversation about the Ethnic Studies Requirement by providing better evidence of how it affects what students know, as well as what they think about what they know, with respect to racial and ethnic diversity in the United States.

D. **FOCUS:** Humanities breadth assessment

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Learning outcomes for humanities breadth have not yet been defined

**STRATEGY:** Focussed discussion with Humanities faculty to define “Essential Learning in the Humanities”

**KEY FINDINGS:** This project has been suspended pending resolution of questions related to creation of a new College of the Arts.

**Summary of work to date:** In 2010-2011, the UGEC advised the Assessment Committee to focus on one area of breadth (rather than all three) and pursue discussions with faculty and staff in that area. The focus of these discussions will be to consider what breadth contributes to learning for non-specialists. Building on the successful “Year of the Humanities” and “Year of the Arts”, the UGEC recommended that we focus attention on that area, and work collaboratively with faculty members who were involved in those discussions to identify general learning outcomes that will help us assess student learning in the Humanities. However, developments related to the proposed College of the Arts, which has demanded significant time and attention of faculty and staff in this division, may delay this project until we are better able to command the attention of the people most interested in “Arts and Humanities Breadth”.

E. **Additional Findings, Implications, and Policy Matters Related to or Deriving from Prior-Year Assessment Activities**

In 2011-12, two other matters related to assessment activities undertaken in the past came to the committee’s attention:

1. **Graded Basis and GER.** While undertaking to define essential learning in Ethnic Studies Courses (described below), the UGEC discovered some variation among UW-Madison schools and colleges with respect to allowing students to complete UGER with courses that were being taken “pass/fail” rather than on a graded basis. In May 2011, the University APC approved a policy requiring that all courses meeting the General
Education requirements be taken on a graded basis. By the time this policy was approved, the practice was in effect for the schools and colleges subject to UGER; UAPC approval endorsed this as systematic practice and clarified the standing of these requirements as an essential component of undergraduate education. The new policy was communicated to the affected deans’ offices and has been implemented via DARS programming.

2. Comm-B Transfer Issues. UW-Madison’s 2002 assessment of the highly effective student learning conveyed in Communication B courses influenced UW System Transfer policy, in that UW-Madison has been able to advocate that courses that might otherwise transfer into the UW-Madison transcript as UW-Madison Comm B courses may only do so if they contain substantive instruction in written and oral communication. This strategy for communication instruction was found to be highly effective in teaching students important skills that contribute to later success in university courses. On strength of these results, the Office of Admissions has been very judicious about awarding transfer credit for Comm B courses, in order to avoid inappropriately conveying credit for Comm B. Unfortunately, this effort to protect the integrity of student learning in Comm B has presented some challenges. Recently, the Office of Admissions and Offices of the Registrar observed that a significant number of Degree Audit Report System exceptions were being written in relation to a particular Comm B course; these exceptions revealed challenges concerning transfer of Introductory Biology courses that equate, in terms of Biological Sciences content, to Botany/Zoology/Biology 152, which is the second part of a two-course sequence that carries the Communication B designation. The Communication B pedagogy associated with 152 distinguishes it from Introductory Biology courses taught elsewhere, so transfer students generally do not receive credit for 152. Unfortunately, the Biology content conveyed in 152 is frequently required for completion of many majors, so transfer students who lacked 152 sought DARS exceptions. The Communication B liaison and the Departments of Botany and Zoology worked with Admissions, the DARS programming group, and others in the Offices of the Registrar to identify and implement an acceptable solution that allows transfer students to receive appropriate credit for their Introductory Biology course work without being granted credit for Comm B. This solution reduces the number of exceptions required while also maintaining the integrity of Comm B pedagogy.

III. General Education Assessment Plan

The 2008 General Education Assessment plan remains in force. That plan can be found at http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/documents/2008AssessmentPlanGERfinal.pdf. In addition, a summary of projects undertaken since 2001 to evaluate the University General Education Requirements is provided as Attachment A.

Implementation of the proposed cycle for assessment proved to be more challenging than originally envisioned, due to changes in resources and staffing, as well as emerging areas of concern. Attachment B is an amended version of that planning document, edited to reflect the work that was actually undertaken.

IV. Proposed Assessment Activities, 2012-2013
A limited number of projects are proposed for 2012-2013, since the UGEC has determined that it is time to revisit the five-year assessment plan. In addition, the UGEC wishes to engage in discussions (amongst itself and other campus-level groups) about the context and direction of General Education at UW-Madison.

Other activities proposed for the coming year include:
- Continued work on the ESR research project as data are analyzed and results written, with implications to be discussed and recommendations made.
- Continued work in developing the TA-curated “Lessonshare”, which was created in response to the request for more instructional support for ESR teachers.
- Continued work to update Computerized Library User Education, the online instructional module that supplements Comm A information literacy instruction. The updated information literacy outcomes will be used in surveys and focus groups with students.
- Project planning for a future Comm B study.

Respectfully submitted by

Elaine M. Klein, Chair, University General Education
Assistant Dean for Academic Planning, College of Letters & Science
## University General Education Requirements Assessment Projects, 2001 to Present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gen Ed Area</th>
<th>Project Summary</th>
<th>Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Planning | Communication B (Comm-B) | **Evaluation of Student Learning in Comm-B Courses**  
*Goal:* To determine through evaluation of student artifacts if students are meeting learning expectations for transferring composition and oral communication skills into the context of writing within a discipline.  
*Strategy:* to be determined |  |
| Planning | Communication A (Information Literacy) | **Evaluation of Computerized Library User Education**  
*Goal:* To determine if the online library education module that complements in-person library instruction in Comm-A courses effectively introduces students to college-level learning and research resources.  
*Strategy:* to be determined (focus group, survey, observation of student learning in context) |  |
| Planning | Quantitative Reasoning B (Qr-B) | **Essential Learning in QR-B Courses**  
*Goal:* To identify student-centered learning outcomes for Qr-B courses.  
*Strategy:* to be determined  
*Status:* Non-calculus / non-computational courses have been identified, and a subcommittee of faculty who teach those courses has been convened. |  |
| In Progress | Ethnic Studies (ESR) | **Essential Learning in ESR Courses**  
*Goal:* To assess student learning with respect to the four Essential Learning Outcomes identified for the Ethnic Studies Requirement. Two projects have been undertaken to evaluate directly and indirectly student performance on the learning outcomes.  
*Strategy:* (1) Artifacts of student learning have been gathered from a variety of ESR courses and have been randomly sampled to reflect the range of students enrolled in the participating courses. These artifacts will be examined by a group of disinterested raters who will use a standardized rubric to evaluate the extent to which they show evidence that three of the four ESR learning outcomes have been met.  
(2) A survey was administered in Spring 2012 to 2,900 students who met specific criteria: those participating in the artifact study discussed above; a randomly selected sample of students who had not yet completed the ESR and who had not and were not currently taking a Communication B or Quantitative Reasoning B course; and a randomly selected sample of students who had not completed the ESR but who were enrolled in a Communication B or Quantitative Reasoning B course. The survey is intended to elicit information regarding student attitudes about topics related to the ESR, an element of the fourth learning outcome for the requirement.  
*Status:* The rating session has been scheduled and will be held in August 2012. Survey results are being analyzed. |  |
| 2011 | Communication A (Information Literacy) | **Information Literacy Project**  
*Goal:* To evaluate the relevance of the information literacy learning outcomes identified when the General Education Requirements were established in 1994.  
*Results:* Feedback from multiple sessions with Comm A teaching assistants and instructors suggested that the language used to describe student learning with respect to information literacy and technical skills must be updated.  
*Status:* Language used to describe what students are expected to know and be able to do with respect to information literacy has been approved. The new language now appears in teaching and training materials, and student learning in these areas will be studied when we evaluate the Computerized Library User Education system. |  |
<p>| 2011 | Communication A (Comm-A) | <strong>An Assessment of Writing Outcomes in the First Semester of College at the University of Wisconsin-Madison: A Pilot Study</strong> | The Communication A Subcommittee, the University General Education Committee, and the University Academic Planning Committee. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2010 | Ethnic Studies (ESR) | **Essential Learning in Ethnic Studies Courses**  
**Goal:** To identify learning outcomes common to all courses that meet the Ethnic Studies Requirement, regardless of the particular topic taught; (2) To engage ESR faculty in discussion of student learning outcomes, as a prelude to designing an assessment project.  
**Results:** In a series of "flash focus groups" with ESR faculty, four learning outcomes were defined. Follow-up meetings with faculty validated the appropriateness of those statements, and helped to ensure that faculty would support assessment efforts in this area. |
| 2010 | Communication (Comm-A and B) | **Sequencing Communication Requirements**  
**Goal:** To determine if students are at a disadvantage if they complete Comm-B before completing Comm-A.  
**Results:** Academic Planning and Analysis determined that only 2% of students take these courses out of sequence; of those, most are taking the courses concurrently or awaiting news concerning exemptions. Lacking policy directing enforcement of sequencing, and in light of the small number of students affected and little evidence that students are harmed by the practice, the UGEC determined that the implementation of enforced requisites need not be pursued at this time. |
| 2010 | Communication A (Comm-A) | **Communication A Benchmarking Study**  
**Goal:** To identify best-practices for assessment and administration of first-tier communication requirements, and if possible, identify instruments used by peers to assess learning outcomes in this area.  
**Results:** Determined that the UW-Madison Communication A and B requirements are distinctive; no clear parallels exist within the comparison group of very large-enrollment research intensive public universities. Assessment strategies in use at those institutions are either highly localized (course-based) or very general (large-scale standardized tests). |

Council concurs that while this study was limited by the small size of the sample, this study suggests students are meeting the learning outcomes associated with the written communication component of Comm A, and that students are being effectively placed into or exempted from this requirement. When the ESR was established, the goal of the requirement identified aspirations about the requirement’s intended impact on campus climate; although these are important goals, this discussion of essential learning in ESR courses created a foundation for future evaluation of student learning outcomes for these courses. In addition, three issues were identified by the faculty in the focus groups: (1) a campus-wide policy that General Education courses must be taken on a graded basis was implemented after it was discovered that students could take ESR pass/fail; (2) an online tool for sharing instructional resources has been developed to serve teachers of ESR courses; and (3) Academic Planning and Analysis conducted a study of course-taking patterns for students meeting ESR to help guide development of future assessment projects. Because the Comm-B curriculum is spread out over 242 courses and topics taught in 57 different departments, a considerable amount of administrative effort would be needed to enforce sequencing on these courses. Given little evidence that student learning would be significantly improved by this expenditure of effort, those resources are better used elsewhere. Although we had hoped to identify an effective approach or tool for assessing student learning in this area which we might use, none were well suited to UW-Madison’s distinctive communication requirements (which define student learning in communication and critical thinking in several dimensions). As a result, a study focused on our local requirements was developed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Project Area</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning B (Qr-B)</td>
<td>Evaluating Capacity of QR-B Course Array to Deliver QR Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>Goal: To determine through syllabus review if all courses designated as QR-B courses continue to meet course criteria and have the capacity to deliver QR learning outcomes, and to identify “non-Calculus” QR-B courses for future assessment of student learning outcomes in non-computational QR courses. Results: Two courses were removed from QR-B course array; one course was substantially revised to meet criteria; all courses for which QR-A was not specifically set as prerequisite were contacted and asked to set and enforce “satisfaction of QR-A” as a requisite. Completion of QR-A before QR-B helps to ensure that students have the necessary mathematical foundations for dealing with quantitative information and processes in the subsequent course. We anticipate that students will perform better in QR-B courses as a result of this change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Communication: Information Literacy</td>
<td>Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills.</td>
<td>Goal: To obtain baseline data on information literacy skills among incoming first-year students. Results: although results revealed high level of preparation for students admitted to UW–Madison, sample size problems suggested the need to reevaluate use of this instrument and the study design. Although we had hoped to use this standardized test for future assessments of Information Literacy, it appears that this instrument and this study design are unsuited to conditions at UW-Madison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Communication-A (Comm-A)</td>
<td>An Assessment Study of the Effectiveness of the General Education Communication ‘A’ Requirement.</td>
<td>Goal: To determine whether students in Comm-A courses report gains in specific communication skills targeted by Comm-A courses. Results: Students reported significant gains; students in ESL versions of Comm-A report competencies equal to those reported by native speakers of English. Study also provided opportunity to improve administrative processes for calibration among Comm-A courses. When compared to students who have not completed Comm-A courses, those who do complete Comm-A report improvements in learning. Furthermore, non-native speakers of English who must also complete Comm-A report equivalent gains, suggesting that they are not at a disadvantage. (Although this method of self-report needs to be validated using a direct measure of student learning, prior experience with self-report in QR-A suggest that students can accurately gauge their learning gains.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Breadth</td>
<td>UW–Madison General Education Requirements Survey.</td>
<td>Goal: obtain baseline data on instructor awareness/value for the general education requirements Results: Instructors teaching in areas of the curriculum that are regularly assessed report greater understanding of and value of breadth requirements. The study revealed a disconnect between divisional areas, and highlighted the need to engage instructors in dialogue about liberal education and breadth. Student learning can only be assessed if instructors have identified (and value) common outcomes for requirements. This study revealed the need to communicate more clearly about the purpose of these requirements, which should have the effect not only of ensuring that instructors understand the purpose of these requirements, but that students do, too. This study has informed communication about breadth requirements, including revision of catalog and advising information about breadth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning B (Qr-B)</td>
<td>Student Perceptions of Learning in Quantitative Reasoning B Courses.</td>
<td>Goal: to understand student perceptions of quantitative learning in non-math/statistical/computational QR-B courses. Results: Confirmed strong learning in mathematical skill areas; however, the study identified a need to address “quantitative critical thinking.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning A (Qr-A)</td>
<td>Two Assessment Studies of the General Education Quantitative Reasoning ‘A’ Requirement (I) How the QR-A Requirement Affects Mathematical Proficiency; and (II) How the QR-A Requirement Affects Student Self-Assessments of Quantitative Reasoning Skills and Preparation for Future Courses.</td>
<td>Goal: To measure student learning in light of learning goals identified for QR-A, using survey of student perception of skills and pre/post-test. Results: study demonstrated strong learning gains in post-test. The study also identified a strong correlation between student perception of skills gained and their demonstration of skills gained, which strengthens confidence in use of perception-of-learning surveys as a strategy for assessing student learning. Students who complete QR-A courses improve in mathematical proficiency more than students who don’t take this course. In addition, students accurately report their own impressions of that improvement, which suggests that surveys on this topic may serve as future tools for assessment in this area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2005 | Communication-B (Comm-B) | Administrative Analysis: Comm-B Course Credit Transfer. | Communication between several administrative units now
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Course/Program</th>
<th>Project/Activity</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Ethnic Studies</td>
<td>Review of Ethnic Studies Course Array (May 2005)</td>
<td>Goal: to implement revisions to ethnic study course criteria.</td>
<td>Results: descriptive guidelines and student learning outcomes for courses meeting the Ethnic Studies requirement were established. Course syllabi were evaluated to calibrate course array to learning outcomes.</td>
<td>Although this study did not focus on artifacts of student learning, the alignment of the course array with the stated goals of the requirement is essential to creating the capacity for designated courses to improve student learning in those areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Communication-B (Comm-B)</td>
<td>Administrative Analysis: Student Comm-B Course-Taking Patterns.</td>
<td>Goal: To identify “redundant” Comm-B credit.</td>
<td>Results: Reduced curricular redundancy in Comm-B course array; identified transfer-credit issues.</td>
<td>This was an administrative study which allowed the General Education Program to better manage limited resources for a costly requirement by reducing repetition and redundancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Ethnic Studies</td>
<td>Review of the Ethnic Studies Requirement (March 2000–May 2002).</td>
<td>Goal: to review this decade-old requirement and evaluate student understanding of learning goals, identify administrative issues.</td>
<td>Results: twenty-three recommendations were approved, including recommendations to revise the requirement and course criteria, define and assess student learning outcomes; and to convene an implementation committee to enact the changes.</td>
<td>This study focused on administrative issues, and faculty/staff and student perceptions of the ESR. A key outcome was the call for greater clarification of the goals of this requirement, careful examination of the courses used to meet it, articulation of student-centered learning outcomes, and assessment of the extent to which those outcomes are met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Information Literacy (Comm-A)</td>
<td>Information Literacy Workbook Project</td>
<td>Goal: To determine, through a rubric-based analysis of student behavior while engaged in information-seeking tasks, how and how well they complete an online research project.</td>
<td>Results: Students engaged in online research use a variety of information seeking strategies; the Computerized Library User Education module will be modified to guide students to more effective strategies.</td>
<td>Curriculum changes were made as a result of studying student behavior while engaged in online library research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Communication-B (Comm-B)</td>
<td>Communication-B Study: Outcomes Associated with the General Education Communication-B Requirement.</td>
<td>Goal: To evaluate student learning in Comm-B courses.</td>
<td>Results: recommendations to adjust course criteria, provide more resources to support oral communication instruction, and expand requirement to take Comm-A. several recommendations were enacted.</td>
<td>This study led to the adjustment of course criteria to improve student learning in the dimension of oral communication skills, and to provide better support for instructors who teach these skills to students. These results help guide advisors, who can counsel students about which Comm A courses might complement their prior courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning A (Qr-A)</td>
<td>QR-A: Working Paper. QR-A as a Curricular Component: A First Look</td>
<td>Goal: Through comparison of course-taking patterns and graduation rates for students before and after implementation of QR-A, the UGEC sought to obtain a better understanding of students (e.g., high school preparation, performance on standardized tests, choice of major) who must take QR-A courses and the impact the requirement has upon their careers at UW-Madison.</td>
<td>Results: Although a small proportion of students might have chosen to avoid taking a QR-A course were the requirement not to exist, imposition of the requirement does not seem to have markedly altered course choices for the great majority of UW-Madison students. For those who seem most like “math-avoiders” in the Pre-QR-A era, the requirement does not seem to impede their ability to complete the requirement in a timely way or to graduate.</td>
<td>QR-A has reached the students about whom the campus was most concerned when first establishing the requirement – those who would otherwise have completed college without completing any college-level coursework in quantitative reasoning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Five-Year General Education Assessment Cycle
(As envisioned, 2008 Gen Ed Assessment Plan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implement new assessment plan.</strong> Implement recommendations related to Comm A study.</td>
<td>Implement changes (as needed)</td>
<td>Implement changes (as needed)</td>
<td>Implement changes (as needed)</td>
<td>Implement changes (as needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continue 07-08 project: Defining Breadth</strong></td>
<td>Field Study: Administer Ethnic Studies Survey Instrument</td>
<td>Field Study: Breadth (tbd) Information literacy Comm A (tbd)</td>
<td>Field Study: Comm B ESR request for student learning assignments</td>
<td>Field Study: Repeat faculty survey regarding Gen Ed Breadth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis of 07-08 project:</strong> (None; UGEC Assessment plan revisions were focus of 07-08 efforts)</td>
<td>Analysis of ESR benchmarking exercise; develop recommendations Analysis of Comm A course-taking patterns</td>
<td>Analysis of ESR Survey; develop recommendations</td>
<td>Analysis of Breadth, Information Literacy, Comm A Studies; develop recommendations</td>
<td>Analysis of Comm B study and Breadth Study; develop recommendations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Five-Year General Education Assessment Cycle (Actual)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2008-09</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implement new assessment plan, which is aligned with &quot;The Wisconsin Experience&quot;. Implement recommendations related to Comm A survey (share results with Comm A subcommittee, plan to directly assess learning in Comm A).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implement changes (as needed) Implement regular Comm A communication about CLUE Update Gen Ed Website</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implement changes (as needed) Implement QRA as pre-req to QRB (No need for CommA pre-req to B) All GER taken on graded bases effective Fall 2012 Create ESR Lessonshare for TAs Share ESR ELOs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implement changes (as needed) No changes derive from ESR course-taking patterns (informed study design)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Implement changes (as needed) Implement changes to information Literacy language No changes derive from CommA study Formalize curators for ESR Lessonshare</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continued discussions in 07-08 project: Defining Breadth</strong></td>
<td><strong>Field Study: Benchmarking Comm A, ESR Plan and convene discussion of &quot;Essential Learning in ESR&quot; to define ESR learning outcomes Gather and review QRB Syllabi to determine if criteria still met, QRA prereq appropriate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Field Study: Comm A study of writing in CP125 Information literacy instrument scan ESR course taking patterns Engage ESR faculty in discussion of ELOs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Field Study: ESR study of student learning assignments ESR survey of student attitudes Information Literacy focus groups to</strong></td>
<td><strong>Field Study: CLUE study (focus groups/survey students?) Continue work with ESR study?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis of 07-08 project: (No project undertaken: UGEC Assessment plan revisions were focus of 07-08 efforts)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Analysis of Comm A and ESR benchmarking exercises Analysis of ESR discussions – develop and share ELOs, resolve pass/fail in ESR issue, instructor support, etc Analysis of Comm A course-taking patterns: should Comm A come before CommB?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Analysis of ESR course taking patterns; develop recommendations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Analysis Comm A Study; develop recommendations.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Analysis of ESR study results</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan:</strong> 1. ESR Survey – not developed due to lack of learning outcomes. Project refocused on learning outcomes 2. Hire PA to conduct ESR benchmarking exercise 3. Study Comm A placement and exemptions 4. Analyze QRB course array to implement QRA prereq**</td>
<td><strong>Plan: 1. Information literacy in 2. ESR study 3. Comm A study of student artifacts produced in CP125</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plan: 1. ESR artifact study 2. ESR survey 3. ESR data analysis 4. Information Literacy instructor Focus Groups to update CLUE</strong></td>
<td><strong>Plan: 1. Information Literacy updates to CLUE 2. Analysis of ESR related data</strong></td>
<td><strong>Revisit Assessment plan for implementation next year 1. CommA study planning (CommA and B instructor meetings)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>