

2013-14 Annual Report of the University General Education Committee

version date: April 27 2014

Overview. The University General Education Committee (UGEC) is responsible for oversight of the campus-wide undergraduate General Education Requirements, or GER (Attachment A). These requirements were created to ensure that every baccalaureate student at UW- Madison acquires the essential core of an undergraduate education. They create the foundation for preparing students for living a productive life, being citizens of the world, and engaging in lifelong learning in a changing world. The requirements call for students to undertake coursework across the humanities and arts, social studies, and natural sciences, and in communication and quantitative reasoning. In addition, students are required to investigate issues related to our culturally diverse U.S. society. As a whole, GER provides a foundation for the “Wisconsin Experience” – but they are not solely responsible for that experience. Instead, GER complements the work students do in their majors and in degree programs (the province of the schools and colleges) as well as in extracurricular high-impact learning practices available at UW-Madison. The work of the UGEC necessarily involves consultation with colleagues across campus, and committee members from different schools and colleges, academic and co-curricular realms, bring a variety of perspectives together in shared oversight of GER (Attachment B).

The College of Letters & Science (L&S) serves as the campus trustee charged with implementation and administration of GER. The UGEC is organized by L&S, with members appointed by the dean in consultation with the deans of the other undergraduate schools and colleges. The committee reports to the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC), and has authority to recommend policy changes to that body. This report describes administrative procedures for GER, summarizes recent assessment activities, offers preliminary conclusions about requiring “global/international” education, notes several other issues discussed by the committee, and concludes with a policy recommendation. More information about the GER and the committee’s work may be found online at www.ls.wisc.edu/gened.

I. Administration of GER. Consistent with the model for General Education originally proposed by faculty legislation, many courses meet the UW-Madison General Education Requirements, with fewer options available in certain areas of the curriculum (e.g., Comm A, QRA) and many more options available in other areas (e.g., “breadth”). L&S monitors enrollments in key courses and assures that students have access to them, to ensure that completion of GER does not impede timely progress to degree. For an overview of enrollments and courses offered that meet the General Education Requirements, please see Attachment C.

New Courses. Courses are added to the GER course array through the online course proposal process. Proposing faculty request consideration for Communication A or B, Quantitative Reasoning A or B, or Ethnic Studies, or to have the course reviewed to carry an L&S Breadth Designation, which can be applied to meeting GER breadth. These requests trigger review processes by faculty and staff who understand the subject matter, the GER learning outcomes, and the GER course criteria. In the case of Communication and QR, this responsibility is assigned to a “liaison” who also serves on the UGEC. Requests for ESR designation are considered by the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee of the UGEC. Requests for “breadth” are reviewed by the L&S Curriculum Committee, which has faculty representatives from across the three GER divisions (Arts and Humanities, Natural Science, and Social Science). In all cases, additional expertise and consultation is sought when needed. Finally, because the Comm A and QRA course array are the most narrowly defined requirements, special committees are formed to consider rare requests to add new Comm A and QRA courses. If the request for a GER designation is approved, it carries a course attribute that is part of the student’s enrollment record and which can be audited by the Degree Audit Reporting System.

The existence of the online course proposal system has greatly streamlined the approval process; however, we recommend that the next generation of the system will include descriptions of the GER learning outcomes in the “help” materials, so proposers may more explicitly align course design with the GER outcomes and may include appropriate learning outcomes on their syllabi.

Maintaining the Integrity of the GER Curriculum. A variety of tools are used to manage “course drift”:

- The QR liaison monitors QRA courses and has reviewed syllabi of all courses that meet the QRB requirement to verify that they have the capacity to deliver the desired learning outcomes.
- The Comm A subcommittee, composed of Comm A course directors and colleagues from units that support the program or serve first year students, meets several times a year to discuss administrative issues (access, enrollment patterns) and learning outcomes for these courses.
- The Writing Across the Curriculum Program provides training for Comm B course instructors (faculty and TAs) as part of its mission to infuse instruction in written and oral communication in Comm B and other writing intensive courses.
- The Ethnic Studies Subcommittee convenes meetings each semester with faculty and staff who teach ESR courses to discuss the requirement and the essential learning outcomes for ESR courses. These meetings were a key element of the recent ESR assessment project.
- Each semester, the chair of the UGEC sends a memo to departments and instructors of courses designated as meeting Comm, QR, and ES requirements to remind of the learning outcomes associated with the courses. Though no parallel procedure exists to communicate with departments about “breadth” requirements, curricular service representatives, enrollment management staff, and deans monitor “meets with” arrangements to ensure that students enrolled in courses bearing “breadth” designations are awarded credit appropriate to the designation.

Another administrative responsibility associated with maintaining the integrity of the curriculum involves managing requests for GER course substitutions (commonly known as “exceptions”). Since General Education Requirements are never waived, it is sometimes necessary to allow students to count non-GER courses toward meeting requirements. For a substitution to be considered, the course must align with the stated learning outcomes and meet any other criteria for the requirement. Requests for substitutions are rare; however, a handful are reviewed by the Communication and QR liaisons or by the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee, and by deans’ offices. In these cases, the student must produce a syllabus from the semester in which the course was taken and must respond to requests for additional information, including samples of work completed in the course or, in the case of the ESR, a short statement describing how the course helped the student achieve the Essential Learning Outcomes for ESR. Course substitutions for “breadth” courses are granted at the discretion of students’ deans’ offices, usually in consultation with the chair of the UGEC and faculty familiar with the breadth area.

II. Assessment of Student Learning. Since 2003, the UGEC has used a series of five-year Assessment Plans to guide efforts to understand the impact and efficacy of GER. The hallmark of these plans was that in each of the five years, projects focused on different requirements were being planned, were in the field, were being analyzed, or acted on – rather than assess everything, all the time, this pattern helped achieve sustainability of effort. Today, however, the pace of change demands a less sedate approach, so in 2013-2014, the committee worked to update that plan, which appears as (Attachment D). The draft plan proposes to join campus-wide investigations into some sort of enterprise (or home-grown) system for capturing information about learning on a regular basis, with the goal of conducting analysis for purposes of GER (or other) assessment. Because this proposal suggests a

substantial revision to the current GER assessment strategy, efforts to assess GER were put on hold while the plan updates were discussed. However, one project was completed: a focused study of the Ethnic Studies Requirement.

ESR Assessment Project. 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, completed a research project intended to help us understand student learning in ESR courses with respect to learning outcomes that were developed by ESR faculty in 2010. The four learning outcomes defined by the faculty as “Essential Learning in Ethnic Studies” are:

- **Awareness of History’s Impact on the Present** – Students who take ES courses learn highlight how certain histories have been valued and devalued, and how these differences have promulgated disparities in contemporary American society.
- **Ability to Recognize and Question Assumptions** – Students who take ES courses learn to recognize and apply critical thinking skills, specifically 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. The ESR challenges students to question their own assumptions and preconceived notions on these topics.
- **A Consciousness of Self and Other** - Awareness of self is inextricably linked with awareness of and empathy towards the perspectives of others. In constructing a space for this kind of discussion in their classrooms, students in ES courses have an opportunity to think about identity issues, including their own identity, as well as connections they might have to people “outside” their focused social circle.
- **Effective Participation in a Multicultural Society** – Students in ES courses should understand the relevance of these topics to their “lives outside the classroom”, and pursuing the objectives above should not only lead to student behavioral change, but to *action* in the real world. Students should be able to participate in a multicultural society more effectively, respectfully, and meaningfully. This participation may be as mundane as being able to discuss race with a colleague or friend, or to recognize inequities in interpersonal, institutional, or other contexts.

In partnership with the faculty and staff who taught ES courses in Spring 2012, researchers gathered “artifacts of student learning” from 21 ES courses. From these participating courses, 15 sets of artifacts were selected for study (steps were taken to ensure that neither students nor faculty knew if their class or project was selected). These artifacts were then evaluated by a team of raters who used a rubric based on standardized rubrics originally developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities “Liberal Education and America’s Promise” project. This project adapted the AAC&U materials in consultation with ESR faculty, to ensure that they aligned with the aspirations of the locally articulated learning outcomes. Raters were carefully trained to use the tool, and each artifact was rated by several raters. The data from this study were analyzed and a preliminary discussion with faculty was held in both Spring and Fall 2013, and the final report was submitted to the UGEC in April 2014.

Results of the artifact study were equivocal. Statistical analysis of raters’ scores reveals that students in ESR courses are moving from an “emerging and inconsistent” level of cognitive skills associated with the ESR to a “developing and consistent” level; however, the variation in scoring among raters, and the challenges reported by raters with respect to evaluating certain types of artifacts, suggest that there was an inherent difficulty in mapping artifacts to outcomes, and that the very wide variety of artifacts evaluated contributed to the difficulty. A further issue raised in discussion with the ES faculty is that the learning outcomes might be better evaluated by a portfolio of work rather than a single paper or essay written in an exam. Perhaps the most significant result of this effort derives

from what the researchers learned about efforts to assess student learning in this way, and how better to design a study.

The second study had more clear results. Shortly after the end of the Spring 2012 semester, a survey of students was conducted to discern “attitudinal impacts” of the ESR that may contribute to students’ personal growth and affect campus climate (as specified in Faculty Legislation governing the ESR). Three groups of students were surveyed: **Group 1 (N= 545)** All students enrolled in a Spring 2012 ESR course, who had not previously taken an ESR course, and who also consented to participate in the artifact study (27% response rate); **Group 2 (N=1157)** All students enrolled in a Spring 2012 ESR course who had not previously taken an ESR course, who were not participating in the artifact study, and who were not enrolled in a Spring 2012 Comm B or QRB course (21.2% response rate); and **Group 3 (N= 1157)** A randomly selected group of students who were not enrolled in a Spring 2012 ESR course, who had not previously taken an ESR course, and who were enrolled in either a Spring 2012 Comm B or a QRB course (19% response rate). The data were analyzed and discussed with the ES Subcommittee and faculty in Fall 2013, and the final report was submitted in September 2013.

The survey results point to a consistent pattern: those students who had taken an ES course scored higher on the ES learning outcome measures than those who had not, controlling for the student’s age and number of semesters at UW-Madison. Differences among groups were small for most variables, but were mostly statistically significant, even after controls. The same patterns were observed for those with low and high levels of prior experience with diversity, and were observed even in the sub-group of White-identified students with low levels of pre-college exposure to diversity. These measurable differences suggest that a student’s ESR course has a positive impact on their cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and attitudes, though methodological limitations preclude definite statements about causality. For these reasons, the ES Subcommittee and faculty recommend strongly that the ESR should be met “early” in students’ careers, and recommend that this be understood to mean within the first 60 credits taken “in residence”.

This project was the first attempt to directly assess student learning in the Ethnic Studies Requirement. The objective was to obtain evidence of how this academic requirement affects what students know about racial and ethnic diversity in the United States, and how that knowledge affects student attitudes and their reports of their behavior. The committee believes that the requirement appears to be achieving the desired outcomes; however, more and better assessment needs to be done. The reports of both studies are available on in the “Assessment” section of the General Education Requirements website.

III. Focused Discussion: Global/International Education and General Education. The UGEC “gap analysis” of the GER in 2012-2013 revealed that peer and other institutions’ requirements frequently include “global” or “international” education, and UW-Madison does not, despite inclusion of “global engagement” as an aspect of *The Wisconsin Experience*. The UAPC asked UGEC to continue its conversations about whether or not UW-Madison should frame such a requirement as a GER, or if the university might promote “global” or “international” learning in other ways. The committee spent several meetings discussing whether a requirement should promote general awareness of “global” issues (substantive problems that require interventions on a global scale, such as climate change), or more specific learning in narrow dimensions of “international” awareness (focused questions that consider U.S. vs. non-U.S. positions). The committee observed that these questions might best be addressed in the context of learning outcomes within the major, or in the context of outcomes specified by the school or college. UGEC members also considered that instituting a single course or limited credit-based GER could have the effect of reducing student interest in global learning: students may achieve a more robust global learning experience if it is linked to an activity (e.g., study abroad, service learning), to their majors, or to their degrees. Before implementing any sort of

institutional outcomes, the committee recommends inviting schools, colleges, and undergraduate programs to describe their global/international learning outcomes (if any); this information could guide analysis of current student behavior and help us determine if this outcome is already being achieved – and what might be done if we wish efficiently to support and institutionalize these behaviors as a “requirement”. We anticipate that these discussions will continue in 2014-2015.

IV. Other Matters. The UGEC considered a wide range of policy matters and other issues related to supporting a breadth of study as part of undergraduate education.

- **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and Wisconsin Common Core State Standards.** The UGEC continued discussion of the State of Wisconsin adoption of the Common Core State Standards, and the interest we have in the definition of “college readiness” and what that may mean for “general education” at each institution. No policy decisions have been made; however, members of the committee are keeping a watchful eye on this area.
- **Information Literacy and Communication A.** As has been noted in prior reports to the UAPC, students who satisfy the Comm A requirement by placement test or transfer credit are not exposed to Library instruction, as is required when using a UW-Madison course to satisfy the requirement. In 2013-2014, the Library Information Literacy Instruction (LILI) group piloted tools to better communicate about this important requirement with advisors. For example, they propose to include this information into students’ advising record, so advisors can counsel students about completing the online “Computerized Library User Education” (CLUE) module. Similarly, LILI has partnered with Communication Arts 100 document completion of CLUE in Learn@UW, which makes that information easily available to instructors. Finally, LILI has been encouraged to propose developing “next-generation CLUE” as an “Educational Innovation”. The UGEC strongly supported this proposal to update the online interface and partner with DoIT to explore how this learning module could be attached to any course or required of students who do not complete Comm A at UW-Madison.
- **Consultation with the Ad Hoc Diversity Planning Committee.** Members of the Ethnic Studies Subcommittee and UGEC met several times with representatives of the committee that has proposed the next generation strategic plan for diversity. Among the many topics discussed were such issues as expanding the ESR, requiring “early” completion of the ESR, and development of new and new forms of ES curricula.
- **UW System Liberal Arts Essay Contest.** The UGEC organized the UW-Madison review of essays submitted in the eighth annual UW System scholarship competition focused on the liberal arts. This annual competition challenges students to describe the role liberal education has played in helping them understand their lived experience.
- **Liberal Education and America’s Promise “LEAP”.** The UW System Advisory Group in the Liberal Arts (SAGLA) successfully hosted a conference “*LEAP 2.0: Integrating Liberal Education into a Changing Landscape*”, on May 30, 2013.

V. Policy Recommendation: Supporting Timely Completion of Key Requirements. As noted above, the recent study of the **Ethnic Studies Requirement** suggests that student attitudes are positively affected by the requirement; if one of the goals is to improve campus climate, the committee suggests that it should be completed “early”. This emphasis on “early” completion of requirements is not unusual in GER: students are supposed to complete **Comm A** within the first 45 credits taken in residence. Similarly, students are expected to complete **QR-A** within the first 60 credits taken in residence. While many students complete Comm A within their first two terms on campus, enforcement has been achieved primarily through advising and course requisites, rather than through more aggressive tools like enrollment holds. As a result, some students are able to delay completion of the requirement well beyond the first 45 credits. Early completion of QR-A is also enforced through advising and requisites; however, some students also delay completion of QR-A. The

committee believe these “soft” enforcement strategies should be replaced with a more consistent and effective tools, perhaps using the course enrollment system.

Recommendations:

- (a) Students should complete the Ethnic Studies Requirement within the first 60 credits in residence of undergraduate study.*
- (b) Completion of “early” requirements (Comm A, ESR, and QR-A) should be enforced through the enrollment system, resources permitting.*

On behalf of the University General Education Committee, this report is submitted by

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Undergraduate Study at UW–Madison: General Education Requirements

From the Undergraduate Catalog, 2013-2015 (http://pubs.wisc.edu/ug/geninfo_study ger.htm)

The purpose of the General Education Requirements is to ensure that every graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison acquires the essential core of an undergraduate education. This core establishes a foundation for living a productive life, being a citizen of the world, appreciating aesthetic values, and engaging in lifelong learning in a continually changing world. These requirements provide for breadth across the humanities and arts, social studies, and natural sciences; competence in communication, critical thinking, and analytical skills appropriate for a university-educated person; and investigation of the issues raised by living in a culturally diverse society. The [Wisconsin Experience](#) begins with this core of intellectual and practical skills, basic knowledge of human cultures and the physical world (and, importantly, the strategies used to understand these topics), and tools intended to contribute to their sense of personal and social responsibility; the work students do in their majors and to complete their degrees also helps them to learn what they need to know not just for making a living, but also for making a life.

Completing the General Education Requirements is an important part of achieving these competencies, and to do so, students choose from many courses in communication, quantitative reasoning, natural science, humanities/literature/arts, social studies, and ethnic studies. Many of these courses also count toward other degree requirements.

All students except those who matriculated at a college or university before May 20, 1996, must satisfy the university-wide General Education Requirements. Students should always check with their advisors to see if their school or college has any additional requirements that go beyond the basic UW–Madison requirements, or if the programs in which they are enrolled ask them to fulfill these requirements through specific courses or by pursuing them in a particular order. Please see [this website](#) for a comprehensive description of the General Education Requirements and the courses that may be taken to fulfill them.

The university-wide General Education Requirements are:

Breadth, 13–15 credits, distributed over three areas

All students must complete 13–15 credits of course work intended to provide a breadth of experience across the major modes of intellectual inquiry. Breadth course work is intended to give students a broad intellectual perspective on their undergraduate education and their world by encouraging them to look at and understand subjects through the various modes of inquiry used in the natural, physical and social sciences, arts, and humanities.

Students are required to complete the following breadth requirements:

- Natural Science, 4 to 6 credits, consisting of one 4- or 5-credit course with a laboratory component; or two courses providing a total of 6 credits
- Humanities/Literature/Arts, 6 credits
- Social Studies, 3 credits

This requirement challenges students to understand that there are many ways to research and explore, and ultimately understand, the world around us. These many "ways of knowing" are intended to enrich the undergraduate experience and complement intensive study in students' majors. Through these courses, many students discover subjects and ideas that will become lifetime interests, or that offer the creative stimulus to see their favorite subjects from new perspectives.

The **natural sciences** (which include studies in the physical and biological sciences) involve knowing the world through scientific inquiry—assembling objective information that can be used to explain observed natural phenomena in a way that is thorough and verifiable. Laboratory components give students

firsthand experience in methods of scientific research. These courses help students see both the explanatory and creative processes in science that are transforming our world.

The **humanities, literature, and the arts** examine the world through many different lenses that help students interpret and think critically about creative and cultural expressions of what it means to be human. Some courses focus on the production and analysis of artistic, literary, and scholarly works; others help students learn about and compare religious and philosophical conceptions of humankind; still others study history and the peoples and regions of the world. All of these courses encourage students to analyze the range of creativity, cultural expressions, and ideas about and patterns in human existence—history, literature, art, culture, folklore—and to use that information to better understand humanity.

In the **social sciences**, students learn other ways to understand humanity. Courses in this area are found in a wide range of fields that share a common focus on the systematic study of personal interactions, and the interactions of society and institutions. These fields use quantitative and qualitative research strategies to look at the variety and scale of these interactions, and in these courses, students learn how to formulate research questions and determine what techniques are best used to answer those questions.

These "ways of knowing" the world around us intersect and overlap, and the ideas presented in one area will often inform and transform what we know or think about what we know about the others. Taken as a whole, the breadth requirement is intended to help UW–Madison graduates appreciate the many and complex ways to understand the world around us. By these means, students develop skills that help them make informed decisions in a wide range of political, economic, and social contexts, to think critically about the world, to better understand humanity, and to behave in socially responsible ways.

Communication, 3 to 5/6 credits

Part A. Literacy Proficiency. 2–3 credits at first-year level dedicated to reading, listening, and discussion, with emphasis on writing. While most incoming freshmen are required to complete course work to fulfill this requirement, students may be exempted from Part A by approved college course work while in high school, AP test scores, or placement testing. Students are expected to satisfy this requirement by the end of their first year.

Part B. Enhancing Literacy Proficiency. 2–3 credits of more advanced course work for students who have completed or been exempted from Part A. Students should consult with the appropriate undergraduate advisor about when this requirement should be completed. Courses that satisfy this requirement are offered in many fields of study; although a wide variety of courses fulfill this requirement, students are encouraged to select a course most in keeping with their interests or other requirements of their intended field(s) of study.

Ethnic Studies, 3 credits

All students must take one course of at least 3 credits which is designated as an Ethnic Studies course. The ethnic studies requirement is intended to increase understanding of the culture and contributions of persistently marginalized racial or ethnic groups in the United States, and to equip students to respond constructively to issues connected with our pluralistic society and global community. Many ethnic studies courses also fulfill other breadth and other requirements.

Information about [learning outcomes to be achieved by Ethnic Studies Courses](#) can be found on the General Education website.

Quantitative Reasoning, 3 to 6 credits

Part A. Quantitative Reasoning Proficiency. 3 credits of mathematics or formal logic. Students may be exempted from Part A by approved college work while in high school, AP test scores, or placement testing. Some students, however, may need to complete a prerequisite before enrolling in a Quantitative Reasoning Part A course.

Part B. Enhancing Quantitative Reasoning Proficiency. 3 credits of more advanced course work for students who have completed or been exempted from Part A. Courses that satisfy this requirement are offered in a variety of fields of study. Students are encouraged to select a course in keeping with their interests or other requirements of their intended field(s) of study.

Identifying Courses that Meet General Education Requirements

The university offers hundreds of courses that meet the requirements described above. Students should consider their own interests and check with their advisor when deciding which courses to complete. Please note that many undergraduate programs of study have breadth requirements that go beyond these basic university-wide requirements.

The following symbols are used in the UW–Madison course listings to indicate how courses count toward satisfying the communication, quantitative reasoning, and ethnic studies portions of the General Education Requirements.

- a—Communication Part A
- b—Communication Part B
- q—Quantitative Reasoning Part A
- r—Quantitative Reasoning Part B
- e—Ethnic Studies

Note: Some Communication Part B courses carry Communication B credit only at the lecture or section level and/or only in certain semesters; these courses may instead be footnoted in the Course Guide.

A wide array of indicators are used to designate the type of breadth courses carry. Please refer to [this website](#) for more information. General Education and breadth indicators appear in the UW–Madison course listings. Students should also be aware that each school and college may, at its own discretion, designate additional courses that satisfy these requirements. For this reason, students should consult their advisors to obtain information about how these requirements are implemented in the school or college in which they are enrolled.

Policies Related to the General Education Requirements

Exceptions: All students are required to meet the fundamental degree requirements of the university, which include a general education component. The university has determined that waivers to the communication and quantitative reasoning portions of the general education component would fundamentally alter the nature of the University of Wisconsin–Madison degree. (Students should not expect to obtain disability-based waivers to the communication and quantitative reasoning portions of the General Education Requirements.)

Pass/Fail: Effective fall 2012, all courses taken to meet the University General Education Requirements must be taken on a graded basis. These grades are included in students' GPA calculations according to school/college GPA rules.

University General Education Committee 2013-2014

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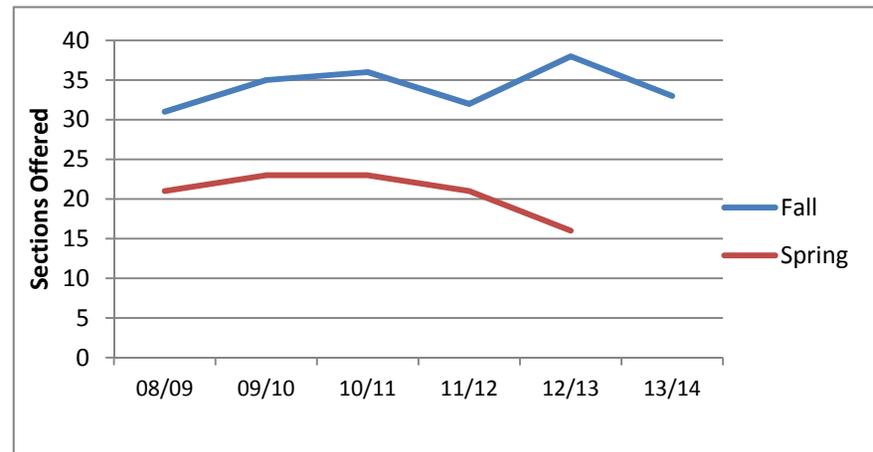
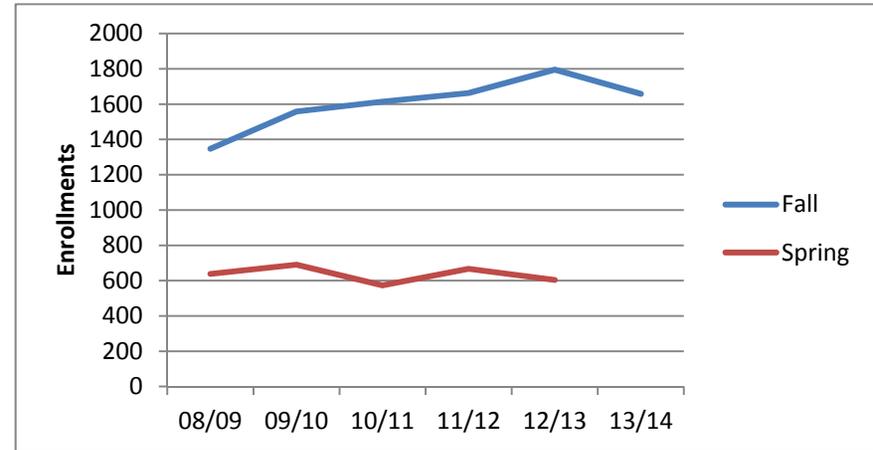
QRA

Seven QRA courses have been offered in the past 5 years:

- Math 112
- Math 114
- Math 130
- Math 141
- Math 171
- Phil 210
- Comp Sci 202

* **FALL QRA.** A range of 31 to 38 sections were offered in a given semester, with total enrollments ranging from 1350-1800. The highest enrollment period was Fall 2012, with 38 sections and 1800 enrollments.

* **SPRING QRA.** A range of 11 to 23 sections were offered, with total enrollments ranging from 575-700. The highest enrollment period was Spring 2010, with 23 sections and 700 enrollments.



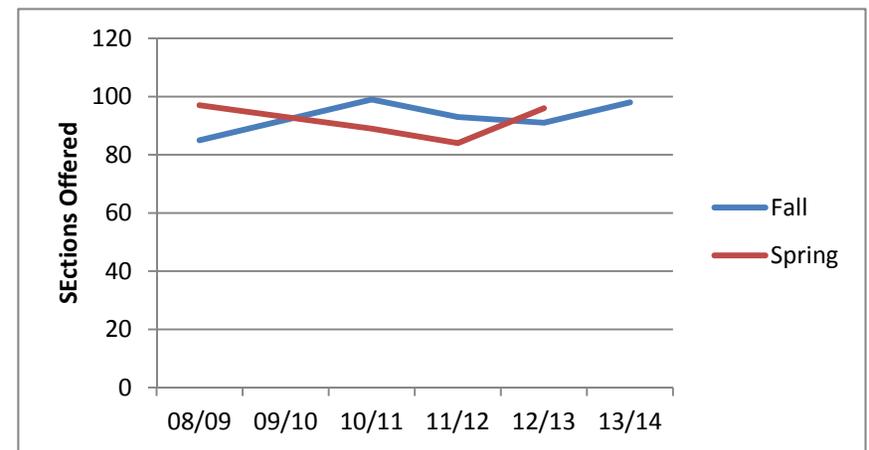
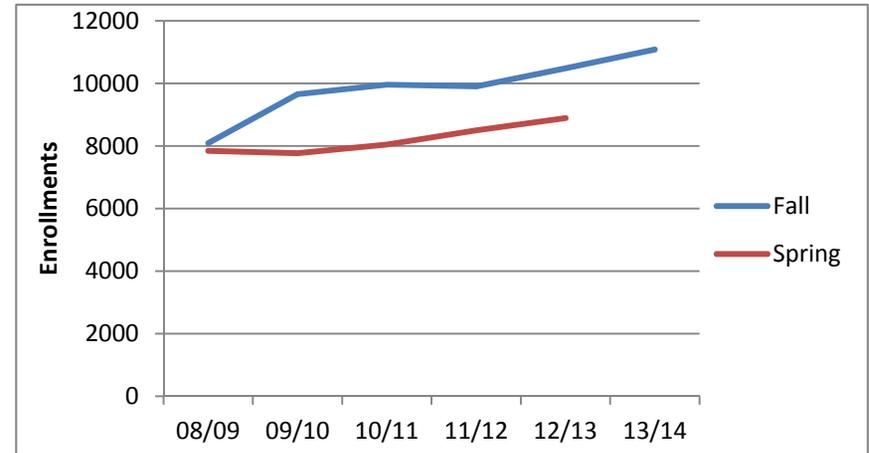
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QR-B

Fifty-four QRB courses have been offered in the past 5 years.

* **FALL QRB.** A range of 85 to 98 sections were offered in a given semester, with total enrollments ranging from 8,089 to 11,085. Enrollments are steadily and substantially increasing, which reflects overall increasing enrollments we see in many of these subject listings. (Math, Economics Statistics, Computer Sci, Chemistry, and Physics)

* **SPRING QRB.** A range of 84 to 97 sections were offered, with total enrollments ranging from 7,666 to 8890. Spring enrollments are also increasing, though not at the same pace as Fall enrollments.



University General Education Committee Report
2013-2014 (May 2014)

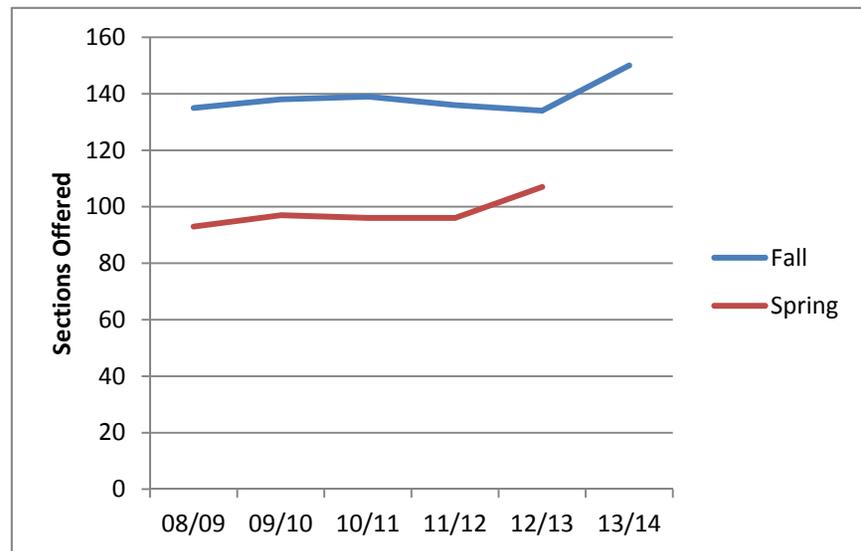
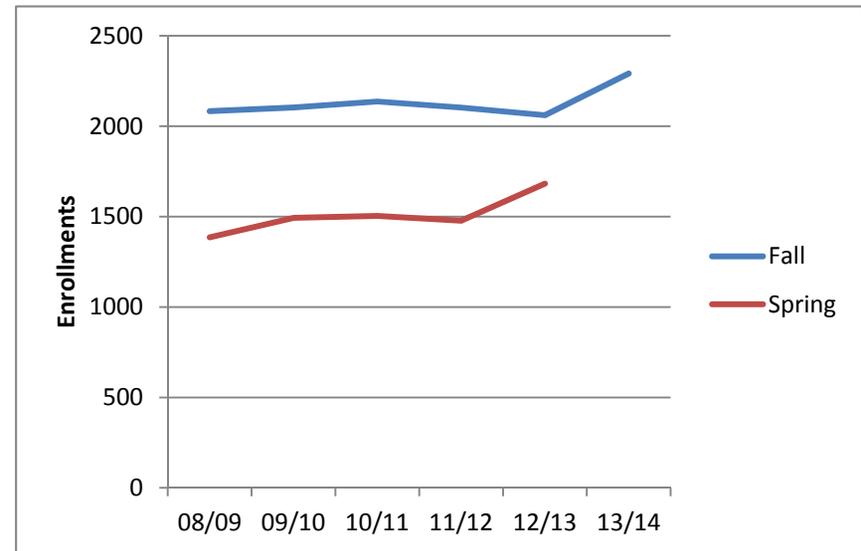
COMM - A

Six Comm A courses have been offered in the past 5 years:

- LSC COM 100
- COM ARTS 100
- COM ARTS 181
- EPD 155
- ENGL 100
- ENGL 118

* **FALL Comm A.** A range of 135 to 150 sections were offered in a given semester, with total enrollments ranging from 2,083 to 2291. Typically, close to 135 sections are offered every semester, in Fall 2013 more sections were added to LSC Com and ENGL 118 for a total of 150.

* **SPRING Comm A.** A range of 93 to 107 sections were offered, with total enrollments ranging from 1,385 to 1,682. LSC Comm 100 was not offered in spring for past three years. Enrollment in ENG 119 is increasing.



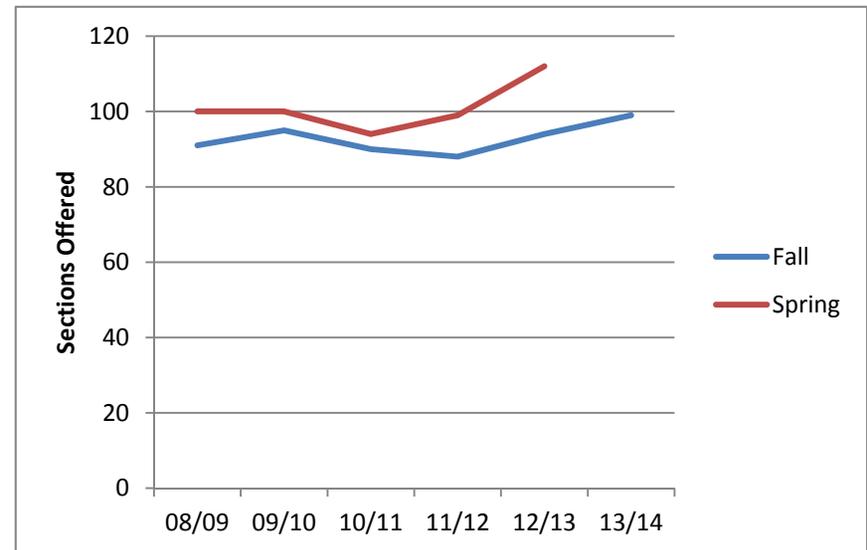
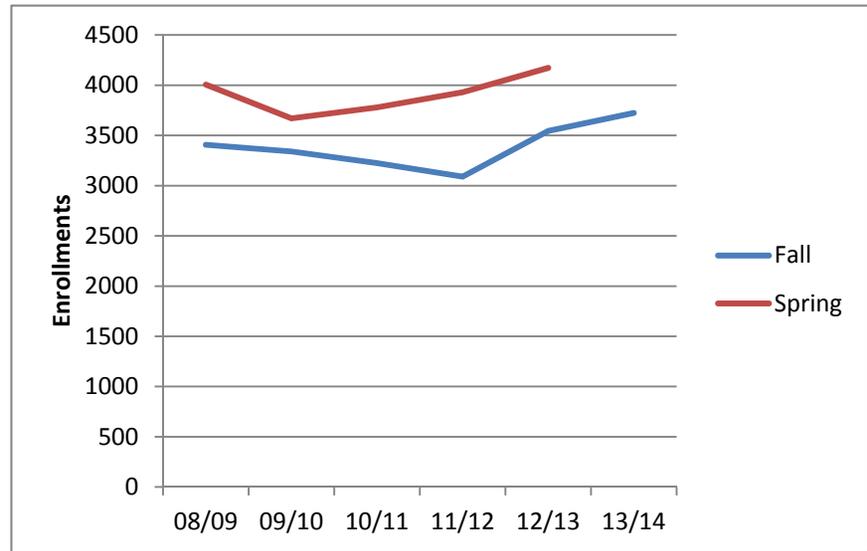
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Comm B

Sixty-eight QRB courses have been offered in the past 5 years. Seven new courses were introduced in the last 2 years, including The Historian's Craft and Videogames & Learning

* **FALL Comm B.** A range of 91 to 99 sections were offered in a given semester, with total enrollments ranging from 3027 to 3724. Both sections and enrollments are steadily increasing, with the average student per section held fairly constant.

* **SPRING Comm B.** A range of 100 to 112 sections were offered, with total enrollments ranging from 3,669 to 4172. Spring 2013 had the highest enrollments and sections.



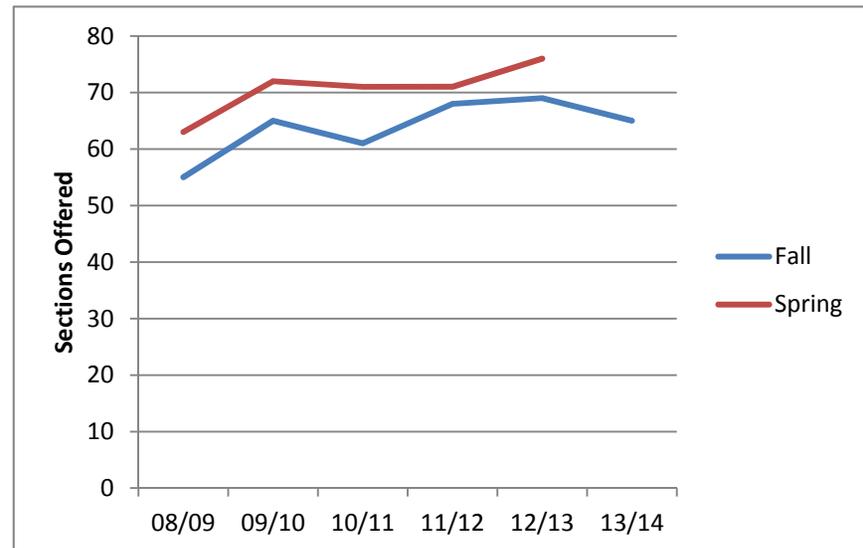
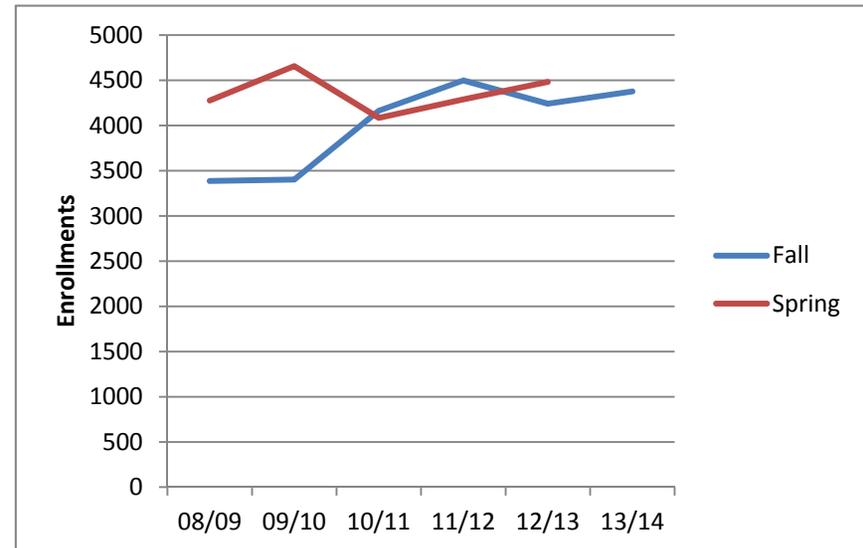
University General Education Committee Report
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Ethnic Studies Requirement

One hundred and three ESR courses have been offered in the past 5 years. New courses are consistently being added.

* **FALL ESR.** A range of 55 to 69 sections were offered in a given semester, with total enrollments ranging from 3,385 to 4449. Both sections and enrollments, on the whole, are rising.

* **SPRING ESR.** A range of A range of 63 to 76 sections were offered in a given semester, with total enrollments ranging from 4,276 to 4657. Sections have been increasing, but there doesn't seem to be a pattern in enrollments for spring ESR.



Assessment Plan for General Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Submitted to the UW-Madison Assessment Council

Approved <DATE>
University General Education Committee

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A. Overview

This is the third formal, long-term plan for assessing the effectiveness of the UW-Madison General Education Requirements and the courses that meet them. Its predecessors, approved in 2003 and in 2008, outlined an assessment strategy that was strategic, drawing opportunistically upon the interests of our faculty, staff, and other expertise available among our campus community. Attention to the requirements was rotated and projects were scheduled to avoid straining limited personnel and financial resources; in addition, the responsiveness of different projects to emerging questions meant that the plans were flexible and efficient: this approach was considered consistent with campus culture, and highly effective. Many projects were completed under this scheme; however, the changing nature of higher education, with increased attention to ‘accountability’ and the need to engage in more (and more frequent) assessment demands that this approach be reconsidered.

The 2014 Assessment plan builds on the previous work of the University General Education Committee (UGEC) and its efforts to maintain a program of continuing and meaningful assessment of student learning for purposes of effective program administration and improved student learning. The plan that follows includes an overview of the history of the requirements and their administrative structure, a discussion of GER learning outcomes and connections between these and a national initiative related to promoting liberal education, and concludes with an outline of the work the UGEC expects to undertake in the next several years.

B. History, Mission and Purpose of the General Education Requirements at UW-Madison

The purpose of the General Education requirements is to ensure that every graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison acquires the essential core of an undergraduate education that establishes the foundations for living a productive life, being a citizen of the world, appreciating aesthetic values, and engaging in life-long learning in a continually changing world. For this reason, these core requirements provide for breadth across the humanities and arts, social studies, biological sciences and physical sciences; competence in communication, critical thinking and analytical skills appropriate for a university-educated person; and investigation of the issues raised by living in a culturally diverse society.

(UW-Madison Undergraduate Catalog, and General Education Requirements website www.ls.wisc.edu/gened)

The UW-Madison General Education Requirements (GER) were approved in 1994, after campus-wide discussions determined that the campus needed a program of general education to lay a foundation for students' more advanced study and to ensure that all undergraduates met a uniform level of exposure to specific skills and types of knowledge essential to undergraduate education. Before this action, UW-Madison had no undergraduate requirements shared by all schools and colleges, with the exception of an Ethnic Studies requirement that had been adopted by each UW-Madison school and college that confers undergraduate degrees. Thus, students at the freshman and sophomore levels had not been consistently required to obtain communication (written and oral) or information literacy skills one might expect of a UW-Madison undergraduate. Indeed, prior to implementation of these requirements, fewer than 5% of UW-Madison students were required to complete a writing course. Similarly, a small number of students were able to avoid taking college-level courses in essential quantitative skills. Furthermore, adoption of campus-wide "Breadth" requirements signaled campus-wide support for the idea that all students should be exposed to the variety of means by which the world is systematically studied, understood, and described via the natural, social and behavioral sciences and in literature, the arts, and humanities.

The requirements, implemented for students who matriculated after May 20, 1996, consist of Communication (Comm A and B), Quantitative Reasoning (QRA and B), and "Breadth" requirements. Like the existing Ethnic Studies Requirement (ESR), they were adopted by all schools and colleges offering undergraduate degrees, with two provisos: each may identify additional requirements consistent with its distinctive mission and degrees conferred, and each may specify for its students particular courses that serve both the general and distinct requirements. The

University Academic Planning Council (UAPC) was charged with oversight of the requirements, and that body subsequently appointed the College of Letters and Science (L&S) to serve as the GER administrative "trustee." L&S now convenes the University General Education Committee (UGEC), which includes faculty and staff from schools and colleges across the university. Committee members present a range of perspectives, including those offered by a selection of

University General Education Requirements

- Communication, 3 to 5/6 credits, Parts A & B
- Breadth
 - Humanities/Literature/Arts, 6 credits
 - Natural Science, 4-6 credits
 - Social Studies, 3 credits
- Ethnic Studies, 3 credits
- Quantitative Reasoning, 3 to 6 credits, Parts A & B

services and programs that have an institution-wide mission to support student academic success at the undergraduate level (e.g., Cross-College Advising Service, Student Orientation, Advising and Registration, Writing Across the Curriculum).

Since the GER program was first implemented in 1996, the UGEC has submitted an annual report to the UAPC; these reports are available online at <http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/FacStaff/background.htm#CampusAdministration>. Each of these reports discusses efforts to assess the program, as well as changes made with the intention of improving program effectiveness. In 2005, assessment projects and reports were compiled on a website (<http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/Assessment/default.htm>) developed to make results of these studies more widely available.

C. Assessment of Student Learning for General Education

Administration and Governance. The UGEC is an advisory and policy body that focuses on campus-wide undergraduate general education. In that role, the committee oversees the assessment of student learning in the GER program. As noted above, administrative efforts, assessment projects and results, and recommendations for change are reported annually and *ad hoc* to the University Academic Planning Council (UAPC). The UAPC is a governance council convened under Chapter 6 of *Faculty Policies and Procedure*, and as the oversight committee for General Education, it is empowered to approve and enact recommendations for change on behalf of the faculty, which is granted statutory authority to oversee the curriculum.

In considering the assessment of student learning in the UW-Madison General Education program, it is important to bear in mind that the requirements form a very modest general education package in terms of scope and number of credits required in each area. The program also allows for great diversity of course choice and is far from a “core” curriculum model. Within that context, assessment of student learning is coordinated by the University General Education Committee, upon the advice of the General Education Assessment Committee and its faculty director.

General Education Learning Goals. In 2005-2006, UW-Madison was invited to join its sister institutions in the UW System as the pilot state for the Association of American Colleges and University’s ten-year project to promote an enhanced understanding of the role and value of higher education. Since then, discussions of the *Liberal Education and America’s Promise* project, or LEAP, have been held across campus. Many groups on campus have embraced this description of essential learning goals as an effective way to convey the aspirations of university-level education and what UW-Madison strives to impart to its students. The LEAP “Essential Learning Outcomes” provide a consistent framework for discussion of student learning, particularly as adapted to the distinctive nature of UW-Madison, or the “UW-Madison Experience.” This perspective was supported by a campus-wide audit of expectations for student learning, which found that the existing UW-Madison GER program corresponds to the essential learning outcomes.¹ The GER program provides a broad foundation upon which further study is

¹ Milner, Jocelyn and Noonan Bischof, Maureen. “UW-Madison University-wide Expectations for Undergraduate Student Learning: Audit of Language in Existing Documents and Recommendation,” July 2007. Available online at <http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/LEAP/UndergraduateStudentLearningOutcomes.pdf>.

based, and which is enhanced by advanced studies in the major and in distinct degree programs offered by the various schools and colleges. Similarly, the essential learning outcomes describe a broad range of knowledge and skills that are expected to help students recognize, understand, evaluate, and respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century. Although realizing all the goals of liberal education requires programming that extends beyond “general education” and includes deep learning in the major and in co-curricular experiences, the descriptions of essential learning provide a consistent framework for explaining *why* particular GER elements matter to students. The alignment of the UW-Madison GERs with these outcomes provides an opportunity also to contextualize the contributions of the many ways our students acquire the knowledge and develop the range of skills they will need in the future.

UW-Madison governance groups have endorsed this framework as an effective way to describe the overall UW-Madison learning experience, of which General Education is one part. Attachment A illustrates the connections between the UW-Madison GER program and the Essential Learning Outcomes. The curricular and credit requirements of the GER program have not changed; however, this framework affords UW-Madison a means of more effectively describing what students are expected to learn by meeting those requirements. This evolution in our ability to articulate campus expectations may help all of us communicate more effectively about the role and purpose of general education, as well as to improve the UGEC’s ability to hone its efforts to assess student learning in the program. Finally, LEAP is a national initiative, and the AAC&U consulted with multiple groups across the nation to develop the Essential Learning Outcomes. As a result, the Association and its member institutions are confident that the outcomes express a set of expectations and goals that are commonly held across institutions, and which are valued by educators, business leaders, parents, and others who have a stake in the future.

Attachment B provides in greater detail learning outcomes associated with UW-Madison’s General Education Requirements. It is important to recognize that UW-Madison GERs were first approved in an era when requirements were framed in terms of courses and content, rather than by what students would be expected to achieve in them. These learning outcomes were articulated much later, as faculty and staff came to understand the expectations that were implicit in course criteria.

THE ESSENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Beginning in school, and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies, students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by gaining:

KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN CULTURES AND THE PHYSICAL AND NATURAL WORLD

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS, INCLUDING

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, INCLUDING

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING, INCLUDING

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

Assessment Strategies. Resources supporting assessment of undergraduate general education are provided by the Provost, via an annual funding request in which projects for the coming year are proposed in the context of activities completed or continuing. Documentation of prior assessment plans, projects, reports, and requests for funding are available online at <http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/Assessment/default.htm> .

The vision for GER assessment at UW-Madison is to use strategies that are systematic and flexible, which call upon the substantial expertise found among the university's faculty and staff, and which may take advantage of opportunities that may arise. The record of GER assessment demonstrates reliance on multiple approaches, including quantitative social science research practices (e.g., database analysis, surveys, comparison of pre-/post-test) and qualitative approaches (e.g., focus groups, portfolio analysis); no single tool, test, or method will suit the full array of GER learning outcomes. GER Assessment projects are designed to balance these values, with the goal of efficiently obtaining accurate "program-wide" information that can be used to improve student learning. These assessment exercises are not conducted for purposes of evaluating individual students, instructors, or courses, but instead, to evaluate whether the program requirements are having the desired effect on student learning.

D. Five-Year General Timeline for Assessment:

As we continue to pay attention to responsibilities associated with administering the General Education Requirements (ensuring student access to GER courses, informing instructors about course criteria and student learning outcomes in the GER curriculum, and maintaining and improving procedures for review and approval of new courses in the GER course array), we anticipate undertaking the following projects in the next five years:

- Continue to attend to the articulation, communication, and understanding of general education goals and requirements to UW-Madison faculty, staff, students, prospective students, and external audiences.
- Actively participate in campus-wide discussions of enterprise-level assessment tools that will allow more frequent collection of data and more efficient engagement in requirement-level and program-level assessment. We aspire to have an easy-to-use mechanism for gathering information about student learning associated with in GER outcomes which will allow us to conduct analyses without excessive intrusion in the classroom. The GER chair and research director and others will work with campus and GER faculty to design and implement these new processes.
- Pilot implementation of new assessment processes. Current priorities for assessment suggest that our first projects should focus on evaluating Breadth, Communication B and Quantitative Reasoning B requirements; the second round will study Communication A, QR A, and the ESR. (Given that we do not yet know what the new assessment process will look like, we cannot anticipate what those studies will comprise.)

- Engage in assessment of student learning in General Education on a more accelerated timeline, working in more areas, more frequently, with a more efficient turnaround from study to analysis and implementation of results.

E. Cycle for Assessment

The table below outlines a proposed schedule for pursuing the projects listed above; however, other projects will be added as situations arise.

2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
<i>Implement</i> new assessment plan. <i>Implement</i> recommendations related to updating CLUE (Comm A) <i>Implement</i> recommendations arising from ESR study	<i>Implement</i> new assessment system	<i>Implement</i> changes (as needed)	<i>Implement</i> changes (as needed)	<i>Implement</i> changes (as needed)
Study: Participate in discussion and evaluation of enterprise software solution for assessing student learning		Field Studies 1. Breadth 2. Comm B 3. QR B	Field Study 1. Comm A 2. QR A 3. ESR	Field Study 1. GER Evaluation 2. Assessment system evaluation
		Analysis 1. Breadth 2. Comm B 3. QR B	Analysis 1. Comm A 2. QR A 3. ESR	Analysis 1. GER Evaluation and gap analysis 2. Assessment system
	Plan: 1. Breadth 2. Comm B 3. QR B	Plan: 1. Comm A 2. QR A 3. ESR	Plan: 1. UGER Evaluation, gap analysis	Revisit Assessment plan, implement following year
Ongoing: Analysis of Assessment Tool, Refinement of practice				

F. Reporting Strategies

The cycle of the assessment strategy calls for information about assessment results to be shared with interested groups on campus (course instructors, the General Education Committee, the University Academic Planning Council, Deans of appropriate schools and colleges, etc.) so that necessary changes can be considered in the context of overall campus needs and resources. The UGEC seeks to bring the results to other individuals and groups who have “stakeholder” interests in student learning, sharing them in public presentations, campus meetings, in

publications, and by posting summaries on the UGEC website (www.ls.wisc.edu/gened). Assessment efforts are also presented in national fora, in keeping with the university's profile as a leading research institution committed to excellence in undergraduate education.

Submitted by the UW-Madison University General Education Committee

Chair: Elaine M. Klein, Chair, Assistant Dean for Academic Planning, College of Letters and Science

2013-2014

Term Members:

Lori S. Anderson (Nursing)
Duncan Carlsmith (L&S - Physics)
Randy Gentile (Business – Undergraduate Academic Advising)
Stephen Lucas (L&S - Comm Arts)
Larry Nesper* (L&S - Anthropology, American Indian Studies)
Ella Mae Matsumura (Business – Accounting & Info Systems)
Kris Olds (L&S - Geography)
Hemant Shah* (L&S - Journalism, Asian American Studies)
Robert Witt (Engineering – Engineering Physics)

Ex Officio Members:

Mo Noonan-Bischof, Assistant Vice Provost
Kimbrin Cornelius, L&S Administration
Brad Hughes, Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum
Clare Huhn, Academic Planning and Institutional Research
Elaine Klein (Chair), L&S Administration
Regina Lowery, Assessment Coordinator
Megan Schmid, Center for the First Year Experience
Sarah McDaniel, Coordinator of Library & Information Literacy Instruction Program
Gloria Mari-Beffa, QR Liaison (Math)
Chris Olsen, Interim Vice Provost for Teaching & Learning (Vet Med)
Wren Singer, Undergraduate Advising
Greg Smith, FIGS Director
Jolanda Vanderwal Taylor, Campus LEAP Co-Liaison (German)
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Jim Wollack, Research Director for GE Assessment (C&I)
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Tori Richardson* L&S Student Academic Affairs
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Student Representatives

Alexandra Rudnick
Alyssa Selk

Assistant to the Committee:

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General Education Alignment With the Essential Learning in the Wisconsin Experience²

UW-Madison General Education Requirements	Essential Learning Outcomes
<p>Breadth (13-19 credits, distributed)</p>	
<p>Humanities/Literature/Arts, 6 credits</p> <p>Courses in the Arts and Humanities share the pursuit of understanding and communicating the exploration of the human experience, and the meaning of historical and cultural phenomena, whether through creative expression, reflection, or interpretation.</p> <p>Natural Science, 4 to 6 credits (one 4- or 5-credit course with a laboratory component; or two courses providing a total of 6 credits.)</p> <p>Courses in the Natural Sciences are characterized by the systematic study of the natural and physical world, and with the use of abstraction and logical reasoning. These courses typically involve a laboratory component to promote hands-on experience with scientific inquiry.</p> <p>Social Studies, 3 credits</p> <p>Courses in the Social Science discipline all rely upon methods of data collection (either qualitative or quantitative), data analysis, or data interpretation that characterize their factual, methodological, institutional, and theoretical inquiry into the systematic study of humans/groups and institutions/society.</p>	<p><i>In addition to gaining intellectual and practical skills in inquiry and analysis, and critical and creative thinking, “Breadth” courses allow students to obtain knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages and the arts. These studies are focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring. Students will prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by gaining personal and social responsibility, including civic knowledge and engagement (local and global), intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning. These studies are anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges. Studies in “Breadth” support integrative learning, by providing opportunities to draw connections between divisional breadth areas and specialized studies in the major and promoting synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized areas. These skills are demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.</i></p>
<p>Communication (3-6 credits)</p>	
<p>Communication A courses advance student learning in the four modes of literacy (writing, speaking, reading & listening, with special emphasis on writing), critical thinking, and information-seeking skills and strategies. Students in Comm A courses learn and practice four processes fundamental to attaining these goals: planning, drafting, revising, and information-seeking skills and strategies. Detailed outcomes have been developed</p>	<p><i>Students in Communication A and B courses gain intellectual and practical skills, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>inquiry and analysis</i> • <i>critical and creative thinking</i>

² Several essential learning outcomes cannot be restricted to a single requirement, and are likely to be introduced and reinforced in increasingly sophisticated ways in the overall curriculum. The GER program is only one component of the larger “UW-Madison Experience” that includes completion of a course of deep study (e.g., “major”) and other activities that intersect with formal academic study. Academic advising and support, co-curricular activities, and enriched learning experiences (internships, service learning, research, etc.) can all contribute to students’ attainment of the essential learning outcomes.

<p>for each of the four processes.</p> <p>The Communication B requirement builds upon this foundation, but strives to advance the four modes of literacy in the context of an academic subject. Course content learning objectives vary according to the academic subject taught; however, each course is expected to develop advanced skills in critical reading, logical thinking, and the use of evidence; the use of appropriate style and disciplinary conventions in writing and speaking; and the productive use of core library resources specific to the discipline.³</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>written and oral communication</i> • <i>information literacy</i> <p><i>These skills are practiced extensively across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards of performance.</i></p>
<p><i>Ethnic Studies</i> (3 credits)</p>	
<p>Students who have taken a course designated as meeting the Ethnic Studies Requirement are expected to have increased the critical thinking skills and awareness necessary to live and work in a multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural U.S. characterized by persistent inequities. Those skills and that awareness will enable students to act responsibly as members of a national community that is closely tied to other peoples, places, and nations around the world. Toward these ends, students who have taken a course that meets the ESR will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be able to explain and analyze the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of one or more persistently marginalized groups in the U.S. • be able to explain and analyze the means by which one or more persistently marginalized groups in the U.S. have negotiated the conditions of their exclusion or marginalization. <p><i>(Background: Faculty Document 1736)</i></p>	<p><i>Students in courses that meet the Ethnic Studies Requirement gain knowledge of human cultures, focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring. They will prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by <u>cultivating tools of analysis and understanding that facilitate development of personal and social responsibility</u>, including civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, foundations and skills for lifelong learning, which are anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges.*</i></p> <p><i>Students in Ethnic Studies courses also gain intellectual and practical skills, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>inquiry and analysis; and</i> • <i>critical and creative thinking.</i> <p><i>Students synthesize and integrate what they learn in Ethnic Studies courses, bringing what they learn to bear upon other learning situations and experiences.</i></p>
<p><i>Quantitative Reasoning</i> (3-6 credits)</p>	
<p>Students who take Quantitative Reasoning courses are expected to attain critical and quantitative thinking skills, including the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize logically sound arguments 	<p><i>Students in Quantitative Reasoning A and B courses gain intellectual and practical skills, including:</i></p>

³ As noted above, Communication B courses approach the four modes of literacy in the context of an academic subject; as a result, many other learning outcomes might also appear in Comm B courses.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use quantitative information to evaluate an argument • Understand the difference between correlation and causation • Solve problems using arithmetic, algebra, or statistics • Understand randomness, uncertainty and risk • Use statistics to evaluate factual claims • Understand charts and graphs showing quantitative information • Express ideas using quantitative information • Recognize when arguments use evidence well • Know when it is valid to infer that one thing causes another • Understand rates and percentages • Understand how data can be used to test a hypothesis • Use quantitative information to solve problems • Solve problems using formal logic <p>Quantitative Reasoning A courses emphasize mathematics, computer science, statistics or formal logic that are needed for dealing with quantitative abilities cited above. In demonstration of the fundamental nature of these skills, students are required to satisfy QRA within the first 60 credits earned at UW-Madison, and before taking a QRB course.</p> <p>Quantitative Reasoning B courses call upon students to exercise and expand upon their QR foundation in various ways, and emphasize the application of these concepts and skills within the context of a discipline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>inquiry and analysis</i> • <i>critical and creative thinking</i> • <i>quantitative literacy</i> <p><i>These skills are practiced extensively across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards of performance.</i></p>
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UW-Madison
General Education Learning Outcomes
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When the UW-Madison General Education Requirements were first approved, they were not framed in terms of “learning outcomes”; rather, the faculty legislation describes (with varying degrees of detail) what courses should do. The General Education Committee has worked gradually to remediate this situation, as various requirements came into rotation for assessment. In some cases, “learning outcomes” were implicit in course criteria; in other cases, faculty who teach these courses were gathered and invited to discuss their aspirations concerning what students should know or be able to do as a result of completing the requirements. What follows is a compilation of this list of outcomes.

Breadth⁴

Courses in the **Arts and Humanities** all share the pursuit of understanding and communicating the exploration of the human experience, and the meaning of historical and cultural phenomena, whether through creative expression, reflection, or interpretation.

Ideally, after completing an Arts & Humanities course, a student should be able to:

- comprehend, and employ, various approaches to interpreting and creating cultural artifacts such as works of art, literature, music, architecture, philosophy, film, etc.
- demonstrate knowledge of major movements, trends, or events in the development of world culture
- demonstrate an appreciation of the complexities of the interpretative process within a historical context
- apply critical approaches to the “texts”/works and alternative ways of considering them
- think critically about his or her own culture and the larger global community

Courses in the **Natural Sciences** are characterized by the systematic study of the natural and physical world, and with the use of abstraction and logical reasoning. These courses typically involve a laboratory component. Physical Sciences courses involve the systematic study of objective information about the physical world, broadly defined; Biological Sciences all deal with the systematic study of the structure, function, growth, origin, evolution, distribution, and taxonomy of living organisms.

Ideally, after completing a Physical Science or Biological Science course, a student should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of scientific concepts and assumptions
- analyze and interpret scientific evidence
- demonstrate knowledge of the scientific method
- demonstrate understanding of scientific reasoning, and determine when scientific information supports a given conclusion.
- think critically about the impact of scientific discovery on society

Courses in **Social Studies** rely upon methods of data collection (either qualitative or quantitative), data analysis, or data interpretation that characterize their factual, methodological, institutional, and theoretical inquiry into the systematic study of humans/groups and institutions/society.

⁴ To some extent, each School and College at UW-Madison has the latitude to determine which courses best meet “breadth” requirements for its students; however, as a matter of administrative efficiency, most rely on course designations administered by the College of Letters & Science Curriculum Committee. The learning outcomes provided here are adapted from the learning outcomes articulated by that body.

Ideally, after completing a Social Science course, a student should be able to:

- think critically about their own societies and the larger global community
- demonstrate knowledge of one or more methodologies
- demonstrate knowledge of one or more theoretical approaches
- synthesize and apply social science concepts
- view issues from multiple perspectives

Communication⁵

Students who satisfy the **Communication A** requirement will have enhanced, through continuous practice in the process of writing and speaking, their basic skills in four modes of literacy: writing, speaking, reading & listening, with special emphasis on writing; critical thinking, and information-seeking skills and strategies. Specifically, students will demonstrate the following skills in four broad categories:

Planning:

- Selecting, narrowing, and focusing topics
- Identifying and analyzing audience information needs
- Generating and organizing ideas
- Comprehending and analyzing texts

Drafting:

- 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
- Preparing speeches for oral delivery
- Citing sources, avoiding plagiarism, and compiling accurate bibliographies

Revising:

- Developing critical skills for reading and listening -- in review of peer writing/speaking
- Revising and editing essays and speeches -- for spelling, punctuation, grammar, style, organization, and logic
- Critiquing assigned readings and speeches delivered outside class

Information-Seeking Skills and Strategies:

- Develop and adapt information seeking strategies in order to access information effectively
- Evaluate information retrieved and select information sources appropriate to the particular research need information

Students who satisfy the **Communication B** requirement will have had opportunities to build upon the above skills, within the context of disciplinary study. Each student will develop advanced skills in

- critical reading, logical thinking, and the use of evidence
- the use of appropriate style and disciplinary conventions in writing and speaking

⁵ Learning outcomes for the Communication Requirements are adapted from the criteria for Communication A and Communication B courses.

- the productive use of core library resources specific to the discipline

Ethnic Studies⁶

Four learning goals unite **Ethnic Studies** courses that are offered on a wide variety of topics. In these courses, students:

- **Increase Awareness of History’s Impact on the Present** - Ethnic Studies courses highlight how certain histories have been valued and devalued, and how these differences have promulgated disparities in contemporary American society.
- **Are Able to Recognize and Question Assumptions** – Ethnic Studies courses promote recognition and application of critical thinking skills, specifically with respect to teaching students to harbor a healthy skepticism towards knowledge claims, whether in the form of media, political, or popular representations, primarily as these relate to race and ethnicity. As part of this process, the ESR should challenge students to question their own assumptions and preconceived notions on these topics.
- **Develop a Consciousness of Self and Other** - Awareness of self is inextricably linked with awareness of and empathy towards the perspectives of others. In constructing a space for this kind of discussion in their classrooms, Ethnic Studies courses give students an opportunity to think about identity issues, including their own identity, as well as the connections they might have to people “outside” their focused social circle.
- **Learn to Participate Effectively in a Multicultural Society** – Ethnic Studies courses should be relevant to students’ “lives outside the classroom”, and pursuing the objectives above should not only lead to student behavioral change, but to action in the real world. The ESR should ultimately engender in students the ability to participate in a multicultural society more effectively, respectfully, and meaningfully. This participation may be as mundane as being able to discuss race with a colleague or friend, or to recognize inequities in interpersonal, institutional, or other contexts.

Quantitative Reasoning⁷

Quantitative Reasoning is the process of forming conclusions, judgments or inferences from quantitative information. There are many aspects to quantitative reasoning. These include the recognition and construction of valid mathematical models that represent quantitative information; the analysis and manipulation of these models; the drawing of conclusions, predictions or inferences on the basis of this analysis; and the assessment of the reasonableness of these conclusions.

⁶ Learning outcomes for the Ethnic Studies Requirement were articulated and approved by the faculty who teach courses designated as meeting the requirement. See “Discussion of Essential Learning in Ethnic Studies Requirement Courses, March 11, 2010” (<http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/documents/ESR-March112010-EventReport-FINAL.pdf>) .

⁷ Learning outcomes for Quantitative Reasoning A are adapted from the criteria for Quantitative Courses. Outcomes for Quantitative Reasoning B were developed in the course of an assessment study of QR-B courses, through discussion and consultation with faculty and staff who teach QR-B courses. See C. Halaby, “An Assessment Study of the Effectiveness of the General Education Quantitative Reasoning “B” Requirement at the University of Wisconsin-Madison” (November 2006) (<http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/documents/GenEdAct06-07AppA.pdf>)

Students who complete a **QR-A** course obtain skills in mathematics, computer science, statistics or formal logic that are needed for dealing with quantitative information. These skills are broad-based and have a positive impact on the readiness of students to take a **QR-B** course in a variety of disciplines.

In **QR-B** courses, students make significant use of quantitative tools in the context of the other course material, for example:

- the recognition and construction of mathematical models and/or hypotheses that represent quantitative information,
- the evaluation of these models and hypotheses,
- the analysis and manipulation of mathematical models,
- the drawing of logical conclusions, predictions or inferences, and
- the assessment of the reasonableness of conclusions.

Across the all **QR-B** courses, eleven general quantitative abilities fall into five general categories:

Arguments

- Recognize logically sound arguments
- Recognize when arguments use evidence well

Causes

- Understand the difference between correlation and causation
- Know when it is valid to infer that one thing causes another

Models

- Use mathematical models to express ideas
- Manipulate mathematical models to draw conclusions
- Understand models and hypotheses that represent quantitative information

Quantitative

- Express ideas using quantitative information
- Use quantitative information to solve problems
- Use quantitative information to evaluate an argument

Statistics

- Use data and statistics to evaluate factual claims