

Eastern Oregon University

General Education Assessment

Pilot Project:

Communication Outcome

Course Assignment Rubric: Course Totals

GE Course: Pilot Project Results Professors: R. Braker, B.Schultz
Number of Students Assessed: 15

Communication: Demonstrate the ability to read, write, communicate, taking into consideration purpose, audience, and occasion.

In German 102, Prof. Braker used an assignment-specific rubric, which is a direct reflection of the GEC Communication rubric. However, the data is therefore not comparable across GEC courses.

The Spanish 107 course was online, while the German 102 course was on-campus, face-to-face.

No student samples were provided for these two courses, in part because the exams were oral in nature.

No material was submitted for two courses (a in Psychology and one in Theatre), even after repeated requests.

It was determined Music 195 would not participate in the Pilot Study because it has no written, oral (spoken presentation of course material), or graphic components, even though it is listed as providing Communication outcomes for GEC. There is some confusion about the word “communication,” as the Music program associates that word with performance (communicating with an audience through musical performance), while the rubric is focused on oral (speaking) presentation of learning.

Two full professors teaching GEC courses in the Communication area declined to participate in the Pilot Study.

GERM 102

Outcome	1 Developing	2 Adequate	3 Proficient
Required Elements.	Sample includes some sentences that refer to information required by the prompt.	The student fulfills the expectations of the prompt.	Sample includes all required elements posed by the prompt.
GERM 102 # of students/ % of Total	4/30%	5/38%	4/30%
Employs Appropriate Vocabulary	Some descriptions are clearly headed in the right direction of appropriate choice and accurate use of vocabulary.	There is sufficient information in appropriate and accurate use of vocabulary.	The student not only fulfills the expectations of the prompt, but does so using rich vocabulary.
GERM 102	3/23%	6/46%	4/30%
Sentence Length	Some sentence-length descriptions are offered in less than the required minimum number of sentences.	Sentence-length descriptions are offered in strings of sentences.	Sentence length descriptions are unusually fluent.
GERM 102	3/23%	6/46%	4/30%
Sentence Structure/ Complexity	Limited vocabulary or structural difficulties in formation of sentences hinder completion of the functional and length requirements.	Sample includes the required number of sentences to present information required by the prompt, yet there is minimal variation in vocabulary and/or structures. (Sentences may follow a repeated format without any variation.)	Varied sentence structure, and creating and recombining previously learned material characterizes a description that goes beyond the length requirement.
GERM 102	4/30%	5/38%	4/30%
09 Gen Ed Pilot Study:			

Communication Cumulative <u>Average</u> (GERM 102 Only)	28%	42%	30%
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SPAN 107 Online

Outcome	1 Developing	2 Adequate	3 Proficient
Writes Clearly	Consistently writes clearly and effectively and edits carefully and accurately.	Writes clearly and effectively and edits carefully and accurately most of the time.	Fails to write clearly and effectively or edit carefully and accurately.
SPAN 107 # of students/ % of Total	0/0%	2/100%	0/0%
Employs Graphics	Employs graphics effectively and documents sources accurately in communicating technical information across the disciplines.	Generally recognizes contexts and assumptions	Recognizes contexts and assumptions
SPAN 107	N/A	N/A	N/A
Effective Orally	Effectively presents material orally.	Presents material orally clearly but sometimes ineffectively.	Ineffectively presents material orally.
SPAN 107	0/0%	2/50%	2/50%
Employs Media	Employs appropriate media effectively in presenting material to various audiences.	Employs media in presenting material to various audiences.	Fails to employ media appropriately or effectively.
SPAN 107	N/A	N/A	N/A
09 Gen Ed Pilot Study: Communication Average (SPAN 107 only)	0%	50%	50%

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Assessment Prompts

GERMAN 102: FIRST YEAR GERMAN

German 102 Writing assessment for Communication Learning Outcome in German

Final Exam included these parameters:

[Frequently asked questions on a typical day for an EOU student]

Answer five of the following questions giving as much information as part of your answer as you can. This is your open-ended prompt. You are expected to use the conversational past, but may also use the verbs “haben, sein” and modal verbs in the one verb past we learned previously, if you wish, when appropriate. You are expected to vary the verbs you use. A minimum of six sentences with six different verbs will get you in the C range, while eight will push you into the B range, and the expectation for A range work is ten sentences.

Trait #1: Address content topic of writing prompt

Trait #2: Appropriate choice and accurate use of vocabulary

Trait #3: Sentence-length descriptions in strings of sentences.

Trait #4: Length requirement of a minimum of six sentences.

Proficiency level at Intermediate Low with strings of sentences a typical functional descriptor.

SPANISH 107: FIRST YEAR SPANISH

Prompt for Written Final:

You will write several paragraphs (250 words min) on your life:

Yourself, your daily routine, your family (friends), your plans for the future, your likes and dislikes, and some experiences (using preterite).

Prompts for Oral Final (in Spanish)

Tell me about your family background.

(CUENTAME SOBRE TU FAMILIA)

Tell me about your daily routine.

(COMO ES TU RUTINA DIARIA)

Tell me about your friends.

(CUENTAME SOBRE TUS AMIGOS)

Tell me about your likes and dislikes.

(CUENTAME SOBRE TUS GUSTOS Y PREFERENCIAS)

Tell me some things you did recently

(CUENTAME ALGUNAS COSAS QUE HICISTE RECIENTEMENTE)

There are many follow-up questions in the oral final to elicit more information and language from the students.

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Closing the Loop: Project Reflections

GERMAN 102: FIRST YEAR GERMAN

Closing the Loop on Assessment: Comment holistically on how well students achieved the learning outcome you were assessing against this rubric. Is there anything you would change next time to improve the design of the activity/assignment so as to improve the outcome?

In reflection, I would add a title to the prompt. Because I had previously made reference to the Study Abroad office requesting input for prospective students from German-speaking countries, I would add some language along those lines in the prompt. And while one student put great effort into answering many more than the minimum required questions, and did so with much detail and in most instances complete sentences, his very consistent use of the wrong time frame kept him in the Developing category. In future, I will offer an opening example to get them started in the right direction.

SPANISH 107: FIRST YEAR SPANISH

Closing the Loop on Assessment: Comment holistically on how well students achieved the learning outcome you were assessing against this rubric. Is there anything you would change next time to improve the design of the activity/assignment so as to improve the outcome?

The first-year Spanish series is too accelerated at the moment. It is evident that students do not have enough time to actually absorb all the material. At our present pace, most of our students do not have the opportunity to build a solid foundation. We are in the process of changing our First-Year Program. We will either adopt a new program, or we will simply slow down the program we have used in the past.

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Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions

1. Unfortunately, with such a low n (15) and with data from only two courses, few legitimate conclusions can be drawn about Eastern's effectiveness in teaching Communication in its General Education Core.
2. The refusal by GEC Faculty to participate in assessment of their courses undermines the legitimacy of the entire program.
3. There is some evidence that Faculty from across the curriculum do not yet readily agree on what constitutes Communication in the General Education Core, nor do they yet effectively employ or reflect upon the outcome and rubric for Communication as developed by EPCC in teaching their GEC courses. There are indicators that many faculty remain unfamiliar with Eastern's GEC outcomes and rubrics.
4. The two courses assessed certainly indicate at least some General Education Faculty teach Communication explicitly in the context of their disciplines, with strong attention to articulating outcomes.
5. In this Pilot, because the participating Faculty did not meet regularly, there is no evidence that participating in General Education Assessment, through the use of outcomes and rubrics, creates valuable dialogue about teaching effectiveness across the curriculum.
6. The two courses assessed certainly indicate participating in General Education Assessment itself enhances effective teaching—just doing the assessment aids in reflective practice for individual teachers. This was true even in the case where the Pilot Project coordinator concluded that Music 195 does not address the Communication outcome and rubric, and the case where the professor withdrew from the Pilot Study of a Psychology course because he realized the way the course has been structured online, it could not meet the criteria for the Communication outcome in GEC. These are both cases of legitimate reflection, although there is no data to evidence it and there would have to be follow up with the two programs to ensure their courses actually address the GEC Communication outcome and rubric.

Recommendations

1. The authority to insist that GEC Faculty participate in assessment practices needs to be developed by EPCC, in particular, fully supported by the Administration, and certainly including the requisite Faculty buy-in. This would require a great deal more discussion of GEC, its outcomes and rubrics, and the importance of sound assessment practices in general. The 2009 GEC Pilot Study indicates many Faculty still do not see a direct connection between General Education, assessment, and sound, effective teaching practice. Many still consider assessment an imposed burden, rather than an effective means of enhancing instruction and providing a coherent general education for all students. However, those who participated in this Pilot and last year's in Critical Thinking readily admit that assessment leads to reflective improvements in their teaching.
2. Many Faculty and programs are still not cognizant of GEC outcomes and rubrics; there are indicators that faculty simply cut and paste GEC outcomes into their syllabi without careful consideration either of teaching to the outcomes or assessing them. EPCC and the Administration will need to develop a plan for encouraging greater dialogue and commitment to our General Education outcomes and rubrics.
3. There is confusion about the idea of "communication," even though the rubric clearly indicates EPCC's intention. So that problem has to be addressed efficaciously through a campus-wide dialogue. Courses that clearly do not meet the outcome and do not employ the rubric should not be listed in the Communication core—or else the outcome and rubric needs to be re-written. Such refinement is a legitimate result of GEC assessment.
4. Oddly, the courses most directly and importantly addressing the Communication outcome (Writing 121 and Speech 111 and 112) were not part of the assessment. They have been relegated to the Gateway area, which leaves them out of the current assessment program altogether, while most universities start with Communication and those Writing and Speech courses and build outward. Progress needs to be made in assessing the Gateway area, in terms of defining outcomes and rubrics, so that those courses will come inside the assessment cycle at Eastern. Those courses, and the others listed in Gateway, are vital to the successful retention during the first year. First-Year Retention at Eastern has increased dramatically, due to commitments of staff, administrators, and faculty to the Core seminars and linked Core sections of WR 115 and 121. That should be all the more reason to look closely at their outcomes in order to replicate their successes in other parts of the curriculum.
5. More General Education faculty should be involved in Assessment through teams. The 2008 Pilot Project benefitted by keeping the team relatively small and having

a faculty member with experience in assessment act as a team coordinator; the 2009 Pilot Project on Communication was negatively affected by the failure to meet, as well as nearly undermined by the refusal of some faculty to participate or to follow through. The teams must meet regularly and there must be faculty buy-in for a valid assessment to take place.

6. The Administration should encourage faculty who participate in General Education Assessment to discuss and reflect on their experience in their Promotion and Tenure Portfolios by making this an explicit requirement for portfolios.
7. General Education Assessment is a year-long activity. In the Fall, the set of faculty doing an assessment should be given their charge; in the Winter, the assessment should be conducted; in the Spring, the faculty should meet to discuss the results, to review student samples carefully, to reflect on both the assessment process and on closing the loop (the effect of doing the assessment on their teaching), and to draw up a list of conclusions and recommendations. It is imperative that the teams meet on a regularly scheduled basis.