

California State University, Stanislaus
DRAFT General Education Program Assessment Plan and Preliminary Report

Introduction/Background

The document *Leadership and Administrative Support of the General Education Program* (2008) displays the structure in support of General Education, with duties for assessment specified for governance committees and administrative officers. *Assessment of General Education* (2009) provides a chronological overview since 1999 of the growth in number and the maturity of the assessment measures undertaken to demonstrate the quality of the General Education Program and student learning.

Goals of the Assessment Plan

1. The plan shall assess the General Education program as a whole and in particular its success in addressing the goals of the GE program.
2. The plan shall be as minimally intrusive to ensure instructor control and decision-making in his/her class(es).
3. Assessment of an individual course shall be the prerogative of the instructor and the relevant department. Departments will report on their assessment of their courses as part of the normal five year review. However, the review will need to be extended to include lower division GE courses in addition to the upper division courses which are currently reviewed.
4. No part of this assessment process shall form part of the RPT or post tenure review of any faculty member, unless requested by that faculty member.
5. The assessment plan shall include a mechanism by which weaknesses in the GE program can be overcome by the development of new courses, or the modification of existing courses.
6. GE program assessment will work in concert with the campuses' *Principles for Assessment of Student Learning*.

This plan outlines the General Education learning goals and student learning objectives, identifies and aligns assessment methods with goals, displays curricular alignment between General Education areas and learning goals, includes a description and timeline for assessment activities, describes recommendations and modifications made based on assessment results; and provides a plan/timeline for future assessment activities.

General Education Learning Goals

The following program goals for General Education were approved by the Academic Senate and University President for implementation effective fall 2000. It is the responsibility of each department to demonstrate how it meets Goals 1-5 and either Goal 6, Goal 7, or both Goals 6 and 7.

1. **Subject knowledge.** To provide an educational experience that will enhance students understanding of the disciplines' basic principles, methodologies, and perspectives.
2. **Communication.** To provide an educational experience that will enhance the ability to communicate.
3. **Inquiry and Critical Thinking.** To provide an educational experience that will enhance critical thinking skills and will contribute to continuous inquiry and life-long learning.
4. **Information Retrieval and Evaluation.** To provide an educational experience that will enhance the ability to find, understand, examine critically, and use information from various sources.
5. **Interdisciplinary Relationships.** To provide an educational experience that will enhance students' understanding of a discipline's interrelationships with other disciplines.
6. **Global or Multicultural Perspectives.** To provide an educational experience that will enhance the ability to look at issues from multiple perspectives and/or that will describe the disciplines impact on or connection to global issues, AND/OR
7. **Social Responsibility.** To provide an educational experience that will help students understand the complexity of ethical judgment and social responsibility and/or that will describe the discipline's impact on or connection to social and ethical issues.

General Education Student Learning Objectives:

General Education student learning objectives are currently developed and assessed at the course level and reviewed via the course proposal and review processes.

Each CSU campus is asked to define its General Education student learning objectives/outcomes to fit within the framework of the four "essential learning outcomes" drawn from the Liberal Education and American Promise (LEAP) campaign, an initiative of the Association

of American Colleges and Universities. Campus efforts to refine and develop assessable General Education student learning objectives that align with the CSU outcomes (Executive Order 1033) are underway and will continue to improve the ability to integrate assessment strategies at the GE course, program, area, and university levels. (See Attachment 1: *Alignment of CSU Stanislaus General Education Learning Goals with Proposed Executive Order 1033 Student Learning Criteria*).

Curricular Alignment

A survey was administered spring 2008 allowing for mapping of General Education learning goals to General Education areas and sub-areas. Personal interviews were conducted with faculty members teaching GE courses during the spring 2008 semester. Faculty members were asked to rank importance/relevance of each of the seven General Education goals on a scale of 1-6 (6-high relevance to 1 – low relevance). Mean scores were used to determine relevance and to complete the matrix below. Out of the 303 faculty members teaching GE courses in AY 2007-08, 119 were reached for interview, a 39% response rate. Only faculty teaching lower division GE courses were surveyed during this administration. Area assessment plans were drafted based on these findings beginning in summer 2008, and will be used by the programs in their review cycle as well in the collection of subarea data for university-wide review. Survey findings and discussions with faculty teaching General Education courses resulted in the preliminary alignment of General Education sub-areas and General Education Goals. Table 1 displays the sub-areas identified as primary for collection of course-embedded University-Wide General Education assessment data.

Table 1: General Education Learning Goals and General Education Sub-Area Alignment

General Education Areas and Sub-Areas	General Education Learning Goals						
	GE Goal 1: Subject Knowledge	GE Goal 2: Communication	GE Goal 3: Inquiry and Critical Thinking	GE Goal 4: Information Retrieval and Evaluation	GE Goal 5: Interdisciplinary Relationships	GE Goal 6: Global or Multicultural Perspectives	GE Goal 7: Social Responsibility
Area A: Communication							
A1: Oral Communication	X	X					
A2: Written Communication	X	X					
A3: Critical Thinking	X		X				
Area B: Natural Sciences and Mathematics							
B1: Physical Sciences	X						X
B2: Biological Sciences	X						
B3: Mathematics	X		X				
Area C: Humanities							
C1: Arts	X						
C2: Literature and Philosophy	X				X	X	
C3: Foreign Language	X						
Area D: Social, Economic, and Political Institutions and Human Behavior							
D1: United States History and Constitution/ California State and Local Government	X				X		
D2: Human Institutions/Cultures	X			X			
Area E: Individual Resources for Modern Living							
E1: Individual Resources for Modern Living	X						
E2: Physical Education Activities	X						
Area F: Upper-Division General Education Requirements							
F1: Natural Sciences and Mathematics	X		X	X			
F2: Humanities	X				X	X	
F3: Social, Economic, and Political Institutions and Human Behavior	X	X					
Area G: Multicultural Requirement							
G: Multicultural Requirement	X					X	

NOTE: "X" indicates area identified for collection for assessment of the General Education Learning Goal; For General Education 1: Subject Knowledge, all programs will collect and report on their assessment of this goal via the Academic Program Review.

Assessment Methods

General Education: University-Wide Assessment

CSU Stanislaus presents its assessment methods and data through the schema of "core indicators" of educational quality. For the purposes of assessing the General Education Program's overall quality, findings from the core indicator measures are extracted and distributed by the Office of Institutional Research. See Attachment 2: *Assessment of General Education Program Quality: Core Indicators* for an alignment of core indicator measures with extracted General Education data.

General Education data are collected and systematically distributed to the appropriate bodies (both academic and support units). Alignment between University-Wide Assessment Methods and General Education Learning Goals is displayed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: University-Wide Assessment Methods and General Education Learning Goals

University-Wide Assessment Methods	California State University, Stanislaus General Education Learning Goals						
	Goal 1: Subject Knowledge	Goal 2: Communication	Goal 3: Inquiry and Critical Thinking	Goal 4: Information Retrieval and Evaluation	Goal 5: Interdisciplinary Relationships	Goal 6: Global/Multicultural Perspectives	Goal 7: Social Responsibility
Direct Methods							
Collegiate Learning Assessment		X	X	X			
Writing Proficiency Screening Test		X				X	
Course embedded assessment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
iSkills				X			
Indirect Methods							
Graduating Senior Survey	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Individual Development and Educational Assessment: Aggregate Data	X	X	X	X			X
National Survey of Student Engagement		X	X	X	X	X	X
Faculty Survey of Student Engagement		X	X	X	X	X	X

These data reveal multiple measures of direct and indirect assessment for every goal. Three goals rely exclusively on course-embedded direct assessment, showing the strategic importance of area-based assessment practices.

General Education: Area and Program Assessment

For the most part, assessment in General Education has taken place at the course level. With the introduction of Executive Order 1033 in 2008, efforts have now shifted to assessment of General Education learning goals via identified General Education sub-areas. Faculty teaching in General Education sub-areas will continue to meet with the Faculty Director of General Education and the Faculty Coordinator for the Assessment of Student Learning to refine General Education learning objectives. For the Subject Knowledge General Education Goal, all programs will report on achievement of this goal within the major; all programs will develop subject knowledge student learning objectives and report on achievement via the Academic Program Review process.

Assessment at the program level is overseen in tandem by the Faculty Director of General Education and the General Education Subcommittee. While academic program reviews, area assessment reports, course embedded assessment, and curricular development are completed directly by departmental and college faculty, the other assessment activities described in this document are conducted by the university's various administrative support offices and resulting reports are distributed to the Faculty Director of General Education and General Education subcommittee for review and posted on University websites (Institutional ePortfolio, Office of Assessment and Quality Assurance, General Education).

Assessment Methods, Measures, and Data Sources Used at the University-Wide, Area, and Program Levels

For each of the following assessment methods, measures, and data sources, a brief statement of purpose and methodology follows, accompanied by the office or persons responsible for gathering, analyzing, summarizing, and presenting information. See Table 3 below.

Table 3: Methods, Measures and Data Sources Used at the University-Wide, Area, and Program Levels

METHODS, MEASURES, and DATA SOURCES	FREQUENCY	RESPONSIBILITY
Academic Program Review [Revised language from the APR on GE]	Program APRs and General Education APR– maximum every seven years	Departmental and College Faculty, College Dean, Office Institutional Research
Area Assessment Reports	Program APRs – maximum every seven years; university-wide projects	General Education Area Faculty, Faculty Director of General Education
Collegiate Learning Assessment* The performance-based test is designed to assess critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving, and written communication. The results are normalized using SAT or ACT scores of the participants. We have two administrations of the test – 2006/07 and 2007/08 to freshmen and seniors. The Office of Institutional Research has completed executive summaries based on findings and distributed to the General Education subcommittee as well as the Student Success Committee for review. CSU Stanislaus uses benchmark data provided by CLA to compare student ratings of achievement to peer group rankings.	Annually (or as administered)	Office of Institutional Research
Course Embedded Assessment* Each year, the General Education subcommittee will select one-two General Education sub-areas and summarize the course embedded assessment data that were collected for courses in those areas. Using these data the committee will evaluate the effectiveness of courses in these areas for meeting the General Education learning objectives. Findings and recommendations for action will be distributed to the University Educational Policies Committee, the Assessment of Student Learning subcommittee, and the academic administration for review and recommendations. Findings and recommendations/actions will be sent to the Office of Assessment and Quality Assurance for tracking and archiving purposes.	One-two areas assessed annually	GE Area Faculty, GE Subcommittee
Course Approval Processes Courses in the General Education Program are approved by review of the General Education Subcommittee in the course of the regular curricular review process. The subcommittee reviews course materials, including a statement of how the course meets the seven GE goals and methods of the assessment of student learning in pursuit of these goals. The subcommittee advises the department and individual instructor(s) of these courses prior to approval. Once approved, a course is reviewed for continuation by the subcommittee only in the event of a substantial revision to course material through the regular curricular review process. To ensure alignment between course student learning goals and GE learning goals, an analysis of course syllabi in will occur in Summer 2009.	Varies	Department Curriculum Committee, Department Chair, College Curriculum Committee, College Dean, GE subcommittee, University Educational Policies Committee, Academic Affairs
Class Size Data on headcount and average class size for the sub-areas are tabulated by semester.	Annually	Office of Institutional Research
Faculty Demographics Analysis of faculty by GE area and rank	Annually	Office of Institutional Research

Table 3 (continued)

METHODS, MEASURES, and DATA SOURCES	FREQUENCY	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>Graduating Senior Survey The Graduating Senior Survey measures baccalaureate students' perception of various aspects of their overall education at CSU Stanislaus, including a section on General Education experiences. Utilizing a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree), students are asked to rate their achievement of General Education goals. The Office of Institutional Research annually disseminates aggregate reports to campus committees and units for review. Data are also disaggregated by program and disseminated to college deans and department chairs for review within their areas.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Office of Institutional Research</p>
<p>Individual Development and Educational Assessment Aggregate data extracted from IDEA student evaluations are used as a means to assess student achievement of General Education learning goals as well as explore patterns in general education courses among faculty and students. Five of the CSU Stanislaus General Education learning goals (1, 2,3,4 and 7) are currently addressed on the IDEA short form. CSU Stanislaus uses benchmark data provided by IDEA to compare student ratings of achievement on General Education goals to national rankings.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Office of Institutional Research</p>
<p>iSkills* Published by Educational Testing Services, this instrument is designed to measure students' abilities to use digital technology and communication tools. The instrument includes tasks used to assess students' understanding of ethical/legal issues of access and use of information. Beginning in 2009, the test will be administered to a sample of undergraduate and graduate students.</p>	<p>To be determined</p>	<p>Office of Institutional Research, Office of Information Technology</p>
<p>National Survey of Student Engagement and Faculty Survey of Student Engagement CSU Stanislaus has aligned its General Education learning goals with NSSE Survey items. Similarly, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement parallels the NSSE and results allow for a comparison of student and faculty perceptions of achievement. CSU Stanislaus uses benchmark data provided by NSSE to compare student ratings of achievement on GE skills with ratings from peer institutions.</p>	<p>Every three years (or as administered)</p>	<p>Office of Institutional Research</p>
<p>Writing Proficiency Screening Test* The Office of Institutional Research disseminates WPST reports annually that are disaggregated by demographic characteristics that include ethnicity, gender, age, ESL status, and parents' education. Beginning in 2009, analyses include native vs. transfer student performance. This information is used to evaluate the efficiency of first-year competency courses as well as inform discussion with regional community college on written communication goals and student achievement. WPST reports are disseminated to the college deans and department chairs as well as to appropriate governance and campus committees to explore trends in student achievement.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>WPST Office, Office of Institutional Research,</p>

*Direct Assessment Method

Preliminary Report of Assessment Results: Discussions and Findings

The General Education Advisory Group reviewed assessment data and made recommendations based on the findings. Table 4 below provides a summary of findings on student achievement based on an overall review of assessment results.

Table 4: Student Achievement of CSU Stanislaus General Education (GE) Learning Goals (2008/09)

GE Goal	Student Achievement
Goal One: Subject Knowledge	This goal is assessed primarily through student work on assignments and grades in courses across 31 programs offering GE courses. Overall grades at C or above (84.2%*) indicate students are meeting this goal. Indirect evidence agrees with this observation. Also, 73% (GSS 2004/05) and 79% (GSS 2006/07) of graduating seniors felt the GE experience enhanced Goal One. In the <i>IDEA</i> evaluations, students report making substantial progress in “gaining factual knowledge” and “learning fundamental principles” from GE courses (4.1-4.2 on a 5-point scale, both years), which aligns with faculty reporting of their own emphases in the course.
Goal Two: Written and Oral Communication	Areas A1 and A2 (Oral and Written Communication) course grades reflect student achievement of this goal: Oral Communication 90.6%* with C or better and Written Communication 84.8%* with C or better. In university-wide measures for written communication, the percentage of students passing the <i>WPST</i> on their first attempt is high and rising (to 87% in 2008). Reported <i>CLA</i> scores for both first-year students and seniors were “At,” “Above,” or “Well Above” the expected level for both time periods. Indirect evidence, however, is mixed. In the GSS, 64% and 69% agreed that the GE experience enhanced Goal Two, a rating lower than the degree of personal gain in writing and speaking effectively reported in <i>IDEA</i> evaluations (4.02-4.17 in 2004/05 and 4.09-4.29 in 2006/07). Communication (oral and written) received the lowest rating of progress of all <i>IDEA</i> learning objectives: in the Moderate range (3.3, both years). The confidence of student performance in this learning goal is not as strong as it might be. As a result, analysis of course-embedded assessment data from Area A1: Oral Communication will be prioritized in the next phase of GE assessment.
Goal Three: Critical Thinking	Area A3 (Critical Thinking) course marks (87% C or better*) reflect student attainment of this goal, supported by <i>CLA</i> scores (as reported above). Moreover, students rate “substantial progress” for this goal in <i>IDEA</i> reports.
Goal Four: Information Retrieval and Evaluation	<p>This goal is the least satisfying in terms of the degree of reliability and validity of assessment findings. The <i>CLA</i> measures information evaluation, but not retrieval; there is no GE Area formally linked to the goal to allow course grades to be an indicator, and the <i>iSkills</i> test (measuring information literacy) has been piloted but not officially administered. Over a third of faculty rank this outcome as the least important in <i>IDEA</i>, and students rate their progress merely as “fair.” However, 52% of faculty report in <i>FSSSE</i> that students work on papers or projects that integrate ideas and information from various sources “often” or “very often,” and agreed that this skill contributes to student personal development. Also, 61% of students report using computing and information technology in coursework.</p> <p>The pilot ICTL (precursor to <i>iSkills</i>) had a very low sample rate; however the limited findings suggest a preliminary indication of basic word processing and higher-order cognitive skills such as retrieving and evaluating information resources and ethical uses of information. Overall findings indicate that 44% of students scored in the highest of three groupings, 37% in middle, and 19% lowest. Subgroup analysis indicates that students were fairly consistent in distribution among high, middle, and low performance groups as related to categories of Define/Access, Manage/Integrate, and Evaluate; about 43-45% students in the high group, 35-39% middle, and 18-21% low. Slightly lower scores were found for the category of Create/Communicate: 38% high, 35% middle, and 27% low.</p> <p>Last, the range of skills implied by the goal suggests it be broken down into component parts (information literacy, use of technology) and tied to dedicated parts of the GE curriculum.</p>

Table 5 displays the General Education Advisory Group’s recommendations based on the review of overall assessment findings. See Attachment 3: *General Education Advisory Group Findings, Concerns, and Recommendations by Methods and GE Goal* for a complete list of findings and recommendations organized by assessment measure and General Education learning goal. The recommendations are included in the General Education Academic Program Review and will be forwarded to the General Education subcommittee for review and action.

Table 5: General Recommendations for the Assessment of General Education Program: General Education Advisory Group, January, 2009

Topic	Recommendations
General Education Assessment Methods	
Indirect Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add questions about General Education on the IDEA course evaluation. • Develop GE questions on the Graduating Senior Survey that are more concrete • Add GE questions to the Alumni Survey • Familiarize students with the IDEA objectives they are being asked to measure. • Conduct an analysis of GE syllabi to see if goals suggested as being of “H” on faculty interviews are represented in syllabi – especially at the lower division level. • Conduct GE analysis in fall 2009 via doctoral students enrolled in Applied Research course.
Direct Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use grades as a direct assessment measure by randomly selecting faculty to develop an assessment to measure a specific GE goal (possibly based on a CLA performance task). • Assessment of selected capstone course projects. • Administration of iSkills.
Academic Program Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify General Education Assessment language in the APR; specify/clarify General Education language. • Reemphasize the need to consider General Education as part of the program in APRs.
General Education Goals and Objectives	
Alignment of Goals and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align GE goals and objectives to meet those outlined in Executive Order 1033. • Align GE certification and recertification with General Education goals. Using Executive Order 1033 as a guide, tie aligned objectives into the recertification process. • Complete General Education area self studies to improve alignment of course and area student learning objectives.
Other	
General Education Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract General Education from FTES from department FTES targets; put in a pool rather than at the department level.

Draft General Education Assessment Timeline

Table 6 displays a draft timeline for General Education assessment. This timeline and activities will continue to be refined as discussions continue amongst the Faculty Director of General Education, the Faculty Coordinator for the Assessment of Student Learning, and faculty teaching General Education courses. This timeline includes activities that will occur in addition to systematic annual processes such as area assessment reporting and the dissemination and review of university-wide assessment data.

Table 6: Draft General Education Timeline for APR cycle

Cycle Year	Assessment Objective	Assessment Activity	Responsible Office/Committee
Year One: 2009-10	Continue alignment between General Education Learning Goals and Executive Order 1033.	Continued refinement of learning objectives and assessment strategies.	Faculty Director of General Education, Area GE Faculty, Faculty Coordinator for Assessment of Student Learning, GE subcommittee
	GE Goal Assessment	General Education Goal 2: Communication (A1: Oral Communication)	Faculty Director of General Education, GE Taskforce, Area GE Faculty, GE subcommittee
	External Review	Invite External Reviewer to assess General Education Assessment Plan	Faculty Director of General Education, GE subcommittee
Year Two: 2010-11	GE Goal Assessment	General Education Goal 5: Interdisciplinary Relationships	Faculty Director of General Education, GE Taskforce, Area GE Faculty, GE subcommittee
Year Three: 2011-12	GE Goal Assessment	General Education Goal 4: Information Retrieval and Evaluation	Faculty Director of General Education, GE Taskforce, Area GE Faculty, GE subcommittee
Year Four: 2012-13	GE Goal Assessment	General Education Goal 3: Critical Thinking	Faculty Director of General Education, GE Taskforce, Area GE Faculty, GE subcommittee
Year Five: 2013-14	GE Goal Assessment	General Education Goal 2: Communication (A2: Written Communication)	Faculty Director of General Education, GE Taskforce, Area GE Faculty, GE subcommittee
Year Six: 2014-15		Write Academic Program Review	Faculty Director of General Education, GE subcommittee
	GE Goal Assessment	General Education Goal 1: Subject Knowledge*	Faculty Director of General Education, GE Taskforce, Area GE Faculty, GE subcommittee
Year Seven: 2015-16		Submit Academic Program Review	Faculty Director of General Education, GE subcommittee

*General Education Goal 1: Subject Knowledge is assessed at the program level through the Academic Program Review process.