



## ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN GENERAL EDUCATION

### SUMMARY REPORT

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Name of Institution: SUNY at New Paltz Academic Year: 2019-2020

Report prepared by: Laurel M. Garrick Duhaney, Associate Provost for Strategic Planning and Assessment

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#### I. General Education Categories Assessed in Spring 2020

We assess each general education (GE) content and competency on a three-year rotating basis. This spring's assessments were carried out under a new GE plan. In accord with this plan, we assessed Humanities, Western Civilization, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. In addition to these content areas, departments should have assessed the Information Management competency in spring; however, the coronavirus disrupted this plan, requiring rapid course adjustments and a quick pivot to remote instruction in March. While majors are still assessing Information Management, they have been granted extended time to do so. The Office of Strategic Planning and Assessment coordinated the content area assessments, in collaboration with Institutional Research and the GE Board, which were administered in early spring 2020, before the College transitioned to remote instruction.

The schedule for assessing the GE content areas and competencies is as follows:

- 2020-21: United States Studies, World Civilizations, Basic Communication-Oral
- 2021-22: The Arts, Foreign Language, Basic Communication-Written, Mathematics, plus Critical Thinking within majors
- 20202-23: Humanities, Western Civilization, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, plus Information Management within majors

## II. Spring 2020 Assessment Process

The spring 2020 GE assessments followed a predetermined process. In fall 2019, Institutional Research (IR) identified the capstone courses in which the GE assessments would be administered and the GE Board informed the instructors about the assessments. The GE Board also sent a notice to the faculty who teach in the content areas that were up for assessment about the assessments and their role in it. In fall 2019, faculty teams developed prompts and scoring rubrics for each content area assessed. In early spring, IR and the Office of Strategic Planning and Assessment (OSPA) assembled packages and distributed them to faculty to administer to students in their courses. Packets included instructions from the GE Board about administering the assessments. Students' responses were submitted to the Office of Strategic Planning and Assessment, which sent them to the Printing Shop and to the GE Board Chair for scanning. The OSPA sorted and coded the scanned pdf files before distributing them to faculty raters, one group for each content area, for scoring.

In addition to assessing students, we also surveyed two groups; the faculty who administered the assessments in capstone courses and the content area faculty. Capstone course instructors shared their observations about administering the assessment. Likewise, content area faculty were asked to complete a short reflective survey about their experiences teaching the GE courses and about student learning. Institutional Research pooled the data. The findings reported below come from this information.

## III. Spring 2020 GE Assessment Findings

The following faculty rated the assessments.

### Humanities

Joann Dejudicibus, English

Kris Jansma, English

**Rebecca Longtin**, Philosophy, Group Coordinator

Stephen Pampinella, Political Science & International Relations

Mercedes Rooney, Languages, Literatures, & Culture

### Western Civilization

Patricia Fitzpatrick, Languages, Literatures, & Culture

Chris Link, English

Heather Morrison, History

**Matt Newcomb**, English, Group Coordinator

Andrea Varga, Theatre Arts

### Social Sciences

Stephen DiDomenico Communication (No longer at New Paltz)

Andrew Horvitz, Sociology

**Stephen Pampinella**, Political Science & International Relations, Group Coordinator

Blair Proctor, Black Studies

Angela Silletti, Sociology (No longer at New Paltz)

Nafeesa Tarajee Nichols, Black Studies

**Natural Science**

Anne Balant, Communication Disorders  
Amy Bartholomew, Physics and Astronomy  
David Hobby, Mathematics  
**Eric Keeling**, Biology, Group Coordinator  
Emily Reardon, Biology

Summary of GE assessment results for spring 2020 and of survey results from faculty who administered the assessment and faculty who taught GE classes in the categories assessed.

**A. Percentage of Students Meeting Learning Outcomes**

Student Learning Outcomes Met by Content Area

GE Category	Learning Outcome	% Met
Humanities	Students will demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program.	47%
Western Civilization	Student will demonstrate knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of Western civilization.	63%
Western Civilization	Students will relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.	34%
Social Sciences	Students will demonstrate understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis.	73%
Social Sciences	Students will demonstrate knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.	65%
Natural Sciences	Students will demonstrate understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data	39%

	collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis.	
Natural Sciences	Students will demonstrate application of scientific data, concepts, and models in one of the natural (or physical) sciences.	56%

## HUMANITIES

Almost half (47%) of the students met the Student Learning Outcome (SLO) for Humanities.

Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program.

Number of students meeting learning outcome	N	%
Meet	67	47%
Does not meet	77	53%
Total	144	100%

Rubric Scoring	Met		Did Not Meet	
	N	%	N	%
Describes the main point or features of a text or work of art in humanities	106	74%	38	26%
Applies appropriate categories, genres, or concepts	85	59%	59	41%
Explains its historical or cultural context	79	55%	65	45%
Uses a convention or methodology from a relevant discipline to analyze it	54	38%	90	63%
Analysis makes connections that demonstrate an understanding of the humanities	92	64%	52	36%

## Mapping of Outcomes to Where Students Took GE Courses

Learning Outcome	At New Paltz	Elsewhere	Not Sure
Number			
Meets	37	26	4
Does not meet	43	28	5
Total	80	54	9
Percentage			

Meets	46%	48%	44%
Does not meet	54%	52%	56%
Total	100%	100%	100%

## WESTERN CIVILIZATION

More than half (63%) of the student met SLO#1 for Western Civilization.

Learning outcome 1: Student will demonstrate knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of Western civilization.

Number of students meeting learning outcome #1	N	%
Meet	131	63%
Does not meet	77	37%
Total	208	100%

Rubric Scoring for LO#1	Met		Did Not Meet	
	N	%	N	%
Identifies an historical, institutional, economic, societal, or cultural element of Western Civilization	179	86%	29	14%
Describes multiple key features of that element of Western Civilization	155	75%	53	25%
Analyzes the element to make points about its implications or effects	139	67%	69	33%
Demonstrates connections that explain the significance of the element in the context of Western Civilization	137	66%	71	34%
Provides brief, legitimate evidence for the effects and significance of the element chosen	118	57%	90	43%

Learning outcome 2: Students will relate the development of western civilization to that of other regions of the world.

Number of students meeting learning outcome #2	N	%
Meet	71	34%
Does not meet	137	66%
Total	208	100%

Rubric Scoring for LO#2	Met		Did Not Meet	
	N	%	N	%
Identifies both Western and Non-Western regions of the world	63	30%	145	70%
Connects the element chosen to the development of Western Civilization	153	74%	55	26%
Describes multiple key features of that element of Western Civilization	141	68%	67	32%
Identifies at least one global implication or effect related to the element chosen	92	44%	116	56%
Provides brief, legitimate evidence for the claims about global connections and	60	29%	148	71%

#### Mapping of Outcomes to Where Students Took GE Courses

Learning Outcome #1	At New Paltz	Elsewhere	Not Sure
Number			
Meets	70	56	5
Does not meet	38	31	7
Total	108	87	12
Percentage			
Meets	65%	64%	42%
Does not meet	35%	36%	58%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Learning Outcome #2	At New Paltz	Elsewhere	Not Sure
Number			
Meets	32	38	1
Does not meet	76	49	11
Total	108	87	12
Percentage			
Meets	30%	44%	8%
Does not meet	70%	56%	92%
Total	100%	100%	100%

**SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Learning outcome #1: Students will demonstrate understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis.

Number of students meeting learning outcome #1	N	%
Meet	160	73%
Does not meet	58	27%
Total	218	100%

Learning outcome #2: Students will demonstrate knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.

Number of students meeting learning outcome #2	N	%
Meet	139	65%
Does not meet	76	35%
Total	215	100%

Mapping of Outcomes to Where Students Took GE Courses

Learning Outcome #1	At New Paltz	Elsewhere	Not Sure
Number			
Meets	73	77	9
Does not meet	25	27	7
Total	98	104	16
Percentage			
Meets	74%	74%	56%
Does not meet	26%	26%	44%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Learning Outcome #2	At New Paltz	Elsewhere	Not Sure
Number			
Meets	65	65	8
Does not meet	33	36	8
Total	98	101	16
Percentage			

Meets	66%	64%	50%
Does not meet	34%	36%	50%
Total	100%	100%	100%

## NATURAL SCIENCES

Learning outcome #1: Students will demonstrate understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis.

Number of students meeting learning outcome #1	N	%
Meet	84	39%
Does not meet	132	61%
Total	216	100%

Learning outcome #2: Students will demonstrate application of scientific data, concepts, and models in one of the natural (or physical) sciences.

Number of students meeting learning outcome #2	N	%
Meet	120	56%
Does not meet	96	44%
Total	216	100%

## Mapping Outcomes to Where Students Took GE Courses

Learning Outcome #1	At New Paltz	Elsewhere	Not Sure
Number			
Meets	62	20	2
Does not meet	85	41	6
Total	147	61	8
Percentage			
Meets	42%	33%	25%
Does not meet	58%	67%	75%
Total	100%	100%	100%



Learning Outcome #2	At New Paltz	Elsewhere	Not Sure
Number			
Meets	56	35	5
Does not meet	91	26	3
Total	147	61	8
Percentage			
Meets	38%	57%	63%
Does not meet	62%	43%	37%
Total	100%	100%	100%

**B. Observations of Faculty Administering the Assessments in Capstone Courses**

Faculty teaching capstone courses were surveyed about their experience with the new assessment process. The findings are summarized below.

Time Given to Students to Complete Assessment

Time given	Number of faculty
20-30 minutes	7
35-45 minutes	10
60-75 minutes	2
As much time as the students needed	4
Students did the assignment at home	3

**Summary of Faculty Observations in Administering the Assessment**

1. Transfer students who did not take GE courses at New Paltz asked why they had to take the assessment.
2. Students said that the questions were directed toward assessing their skills and not about the usefulness of their GE courses.
3. Students asked questions such as, “How am I supposed to remember this? Why am I being assessed about things I learned three years ago? Do I have to do this if I did the assessment in another class? Who created the assessment? Will I receive an individual grade for this assessment?”
4. Students pulled up their progress reports on their cell phones to find out which course they took to satisfy a particular GE category.
5. Students wanted to know why they had to take an assessment that was not related to the course they were taking.
6. Some students found the assessment interesting while others said it was meaningless/pointless.
7. Some students said they found the Western Civilization prompts broad and difficult.

8. Some students found the instructions wordy.
9. Some students questioned why they were being assessed on the course again.

### **Summary of Faculty Comments about Improving the Assessment**

1. A take-home exam or one administered via my.newpaltz.edu, similar to the way we administer the Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI), would benefit students with learning disabilities. The faculty noted that the response rate would likely decline if the assessment were administered in this way.
2. Shorten the assessment and give students the chance to comment on the prompts and on GE.
3. To mitigate the element of surprise that students showed, faculty could mention the GE capstone assessment in their classes and the value of the information.
4. One faculty commented that the process was “fantastic” and the Humanities prompts great. The faculty also felt it was not necessary to prompt students to “ideally” pick an example from the GE course they had taken to write about. More useful, the faculty noted, were the parts of the prompt that asked students to think about a work in the humanities that they could comment insightfully about. The faculty thought that would be a better way of gauging the impact of learning and thinking than asking students to remember a specific text that they may not have thought about for two years. The faculty went to say that if students just read a wonderful novel or saw a great performance or a moving exhibition, we might learn more about how their learning in the Humanities category has impacted them than if they struggle to remember details from a half-forgotten reading.
5. Administering the assessment in capstone classes is unwise.
6. Administer the assessment online so faculty do not have to use class time for it.
7. Some faculty reported that administering the assessment at the start of a semester is ill-timed while others said it was appropriate. Other faculty suggested that it would be better to administer the assessment immediately after students take the GE course.
8. The assessment was unrelated to the capstone course so faculty felt they were proctors, without much knowledge of the assessment, beyond how it works in GE4.
9. The assessment seemed disconnected from students’ current focus and appeared not to be an effective measure of their knowledge.
10. Prior notice about the assessment would allow faculty time to schedule it in syllabi.
11. Survey faculty the day after they submit the student assessments while the information is fresh in faculty’s minds.
12. A faculty wrote, “Thank you, committee, for the enormous amount of work that must have gone into developing and scoring this “home-grown” instrument.”
13. Several students said they had taken the assessment before and faculty asked what they should do in such cases in the future.
14. Faculty said they would like to receive advanced notice about the assessment.
15. Some faculty are thinking about administering the assessments online in future.

### C. Survey Findings from Faculty Teaching GE Courses in Categories Assessed

Faculty teaching GE courses in the categories assessed were surveyed. They were asked to estimate the number of students meeting each learning outcome, to answer questions about how they help students understand the purpose of GE, and about the kinds of assignments they give that align with the GE SLOs.

#### Faculty Estimates of Students Meeting the Learning Outcomes

Natural Sciences: Students will demonstrate understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis.	Meet	770	88%
	Does not meet	101	12%
Natural Sciences: Students will demonstrate application of scientific data, concepts, and models in one of the natural (or physical) sciences.	Meet	765	88%
	Does not meet	106	12%
Social Sciences: Students will demonstrate understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis.	Meet	413	90%
	Does not meet	45	10%
Social Sciences: Students will demonstrate knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.	Meet	428	93%
	Does not meet	30	7%
Humanities: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program.	Meet	335	92%
	Does not meet	31	8%
Western Civilization: Student will demonstrate knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of Western civilization.	Meet	396	78%
	Does not meet	111	22%
Western Civilization: Student will relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.	Meet	370	73%
	Does not meet	137	27%

### **How do you help students understand your course within the broader context of the GE Program?**

1. A literature course such as FRN375 French Literature Before 1800 cannot be explored in a vacuum. Understanding authors' works and literature major periods and genres implies delving into other fields within the Humanities such as history, politics, philosophy, sociology, geography, etc., but also the sciences, such as mathematics, astronomy, economy, etc. Major authors' works are a reflection on, a witness to, or a reaction to the world in which they lived. By constantly comparing and contrasting authors' works within the period and by pointing out the implications of social, political, and economical developments on literary expression, students not only demonstrate an understanding of the importance of the study of the Humanities in their productions, but also reflect on the human experience.
2. At the beginning but also throughout the semester, I relate our course to the SLOs of the GE category as well as the aim of broadly educated people implied in the GE program.
3. Every student in the course this semester was a science, engineering, math or computer science major and this is usually the case. As we cover various topics, I try to help them to see how each topic can give them insight into things of interest to scientists from various fields, to give them a sense of how the sciences, math, and engineering are interrelated.
4. I attempt to show students from a particular major how physics is connected to their subject area.
5. I do not explicitly talk about GE within my course. So maybe that is something I need to incorporate the next time I teach my GE courses. It might be useful for them to review the goals of GE.
6. I point out that the important concepts are how and why we know things, not just memorizing the facts.
7. I highlight student learning outcomes in the course syllabus and how content material relates to each outcome; then, throughout the semester, we discuss how the learning outcomes relate to both the subject of the content as well as across academic subjects and disciplines. These efforts include a focus on critical thinking, information gathering, proper research methods and formats' utilization of library resources, and how to 'do' science.
8. I point out that the important concepts are how and why we know things, not just memorizing the facts.
9. I remind students that learning about the Solar System is part of our civic duty as "citizens of the Universe." As a citizen of any place, whether it be a country, state, or town, one's duty is to know the general constructs of that system. As we all live in the Universe and the Solar System, it is our duty to know its content and the laws that govern it and appreciate it. This also helps put the history of our species and life on Earth in general into the proper cosmic perspective.
10. I spend a little time on the first day when we are going over the syllabus to describe what General Education means, and what the WEST category is defined as to help them know what to expect and that I take this seriously. I always tell them that I love teaching in Gen Ed, and that this foundation is important in their education. I often refer back to the connections they are making and their discussion about how this is what they should be doing in Gen Ed courses - connecting the content across disciplines. I also take some time to talk about what our competency is and why that is important in our course design and the learning outcomes.
11. I try to place Shakespeare--the subject of the whole course--within a number of artistic and cultural patterns that an educated person ought to know about at some level.
12. I use examples from as many disciplines as possible to show the interconnectedness of the topic to other fields.

13. It usually consists of little more than some discussion of the specific category (e.g., WEST or HUM) on the first day of class, with reference to the category SLOs included on the syllabus.
14. On the syllabus there is an explanation of GE and the course's place in the program and in the classroom, I talk about Education and the GE model and why there is a West category.
15. This course fulfills the GE requirement of Western Civilization. The course, Great Western Books helps to lay a foundation for the intellectual development of students by offering a broad base knowledge of the cannon of the most celebrated books of the western world while also providing a critical framework for assessing the works analyzed in order to promote and explore new perspectives, ways of thinking, arguing, and being. Students achieve this through employing methodologies of communication and thought formulation. The expanded palate presented in this Great Western Books course promotes students' capacity for lifetime learning and adaptability in a rapidly changing world.
16. The objective of the course that I teach is to help students get a better understanding of the importance of learning about the "Black and Latino Experience" in the United States. Students develop critical thinking skills through critiquing and analyzing the different genres of written works by various authors of Black and Latino descent. They are exposed to different perspectives of historical and modern authors. Students improve their communication skills through indepth classroom discussions, group projects and written assignments, which is a valuable and necessary skill in any work environment. The knowledge base that students gain help them to debunk stereotypes about groups of people and to understand the value of diversity and inclusion
17. Throughout the semester, I stress the importance of a liberal arts education in general, and the GE program in particular.
18. We had a brief discussion on the first day of class around the question, "What should an educated college graduate know?"
19. We concentrate on making sure the students understand that not only are we working to teach them physics in the General Physics 1 Laboratory, but we are also working on giving them general skills that will help support them in their other classes and life such as problem solving, using Excel, and communicating in a technical fashion.

**What work do your students complete that aligns with the GE student learning outcomes for the content area assigned to your course?**

1. Writing papers, journaling, engaging in in-class interactive work, reading textbooks and other written materials, and role playing
2. Open-book quizzes, exams, and other module assignments (e.g., article critiques and online class discussion), oral reports on scientific experiments conducted at home
3. Conducting original research project based on assignments in "Engaging in Astronomical Inquiry" (Slater, Slater & Lyons, 2010)
4. Using online databases and simulations to learn about the topic, experiment with collecting data, developing research questions that they carry out, and presenting their evidence-based conclusions
5. Participating in class discussions, homework assignments, lab reports, writing on various topics and in different styles, group assignments, reaction papers, and oral reports
6. Using discussion boards and blogs to generate further discourse around themes and frameworks of texts

## 7. Presenting on scientific and other investigations at symposia

### IV. Discussion

Findings indicate that just under 50% (47%) of the students met the LO for Humanities and in Western Civilization, over half (63%) of the students met LO#1 and 34% met LO#2. In Social Sciences, 73% of the students met LO#1 and 65% LO#2 while in Natural Sciences 39% met LO#1 and 56% LO#2. These findings indicate that there are gaps in students' mastery of LOs (e.g., the Humanities LO, Western Civilization (LO#2), and Natural Sciences (LO#1)). Of the four content areas assessed, Social Sciences was the only content area in which students scored 65% or above on both LOs.

Suggested responses to the GE assessment findings:

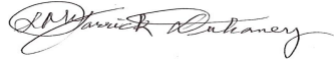
- Disseminate the findings to all faculty teaching Humanities, Western Civilization, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences and ask them to review the findings within the context of what is working well in the course and what could be improved.
- At one or more fora organized and hosted by the GE Board, discuss the GE assessment findings and provide opportunities for faculty to discuss their GE courses with colleagues (intra- and interdepartmental) teaching in the same content area(s).
- Raters should engage in norming activities and fine-tune the prompts and the rubrics where necessary.
- Raters should use resources on the GE Board website and elsewhere about developing assessments (e.g., information on norming and using rubrics is available [here](#)).
- It is advisable that the GE Board inform faculty and students about the GE program and its assessment.
- The GE Board should provide advanced notice to faculty teaching capstone courses in the areas that are up for assessment about the assessments and the role they are expected to play in administering them.

It is perhaps worth documenting here the main similarities and differences between the previous and current GE assessment plans. The former assessment plan called for a 25% randomized selection of the GE courses that were up for assessment in a given spring semester. Faculty in the sample developed and administered assessments in their GE courses and reported the findings in an online database. In the current model, faculty teams develop the assessments, which are administered by randomly selected full-time faculty to students in their capstone courses. Teams of faculty raters score the assessments. Thus, the current GE assessment model provides data on students' performance in GE over their entire education, rather than just a snapshot, as in the former model. In both models, students' responses reveal their level of proficiency in meeting the SLOs assessed.

### V. Dissemination of GE Assessment Findings and Reporting Requirements

The associate provost will disseminate this report to the provost, GE Board, Curriculum Committee chair, chairs, faculty who taught courses in the GE content areas assessed, associate deans, deans, and presiding officer of the faculty. Recipients are expected to examine the results and act on them consistent with their role. Departments are required to document their discussions, actions taken, and outcomes of changes

implemented in response to these findings and their course assessments. Associate deans are to remind departments to include information in their annual reports about what faculty tell students about GE and its assessment. Chairs will submit assessment reports to their associate deans who will summarize them, discuss the summary report with the dean and take action, as necessary, and forward the report to the Associate Provost for Strategic Planning and Assessment for action, if necessary.



**Submitted by:** Laurel M. Garrick Duhaney **Date:** 9.8.20

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