

Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): General Studies	Department: N/A
Degree or Certificate Level: Bachelor of Arts	College/School: School for Professional Studies
Date (Month/Year): October 2023	Assessment Contact: Kyle Crews
In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? Summer 2022 – Spring 2023	
In what year was the program’s assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2021-2022	
Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization? No	

1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program’s student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please list the full, complete learning outcome statements and not just numbers, e.g., Outcomes 1 and 2.)

Student Learning Outcome 2: Analyze ideas, data, and events to reach informed conclusions. **Student Learning Outcome 4:** Write in different styles, genres, and modalities.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe the artifacts in detail and identify the course(s) in which they were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

HUM 2100 (SLO 4): Students complete a final exam comprised of multiple choice, T/F, and short-answer questions. **HUM 2150** (SLO 2): Students complete an eight-part exam through the OpenMind platform that requires self-reflection on their cognitive habits. In some cases, they provide short answers to questions. In others, however, they must provide a written reflection. **HUM 3300** (SLOs 2, 4): Students write a final essay explaining how they might apply historical thinking to a situation in their professions. **HUM 3400** (SLOs 2, 4): Students choose (from three options) a complex or “wicked” problem and propose a creative or unconventional solution, though one that is feasible and rooted in credible research. **HUM 3450** (SLO 2): Students complete a comprehensive exam comprised of multiple choice, T/F, and short-answer questions. **HUM 3500** (SLO 4): The artifact we review for assessment is spread across three writing assignments that are submitted over the course of the term. Although each component is submitted at various times (weeks 3, 6, and 8), we review student performance in the aggregate. Collectively, students investigate digital writing tools, create a mobile app proposal, and build a website. **HUM 4100** (SLO 4): Students write a final essay. The final essay gives students an opportunity to synthesize all that they have read and considered, to research further on the various ways one can engage difference in a pluralistic world, and to reflect on the most foundational question of the course: Is “Confident Pluralism” a good and viable way to engage difference in a pluralistic world? **HUM 4200** (SLO 4): Students write a final essay. They must craft a persuasive argument with substantive research to answer this singular question: How should one committed to Christian ethics approach the common good? (Students are allowed to approach the question from a different ethical perspective if they choose.) **HUM 4800** (SLOs 2, 4): Students write a capstone paper to explain the value of each discipline they encountered in the program and to explore connections between the various disciplines. This means addressing questions like the following: (1) What is the value of history, public policy, theological ethics, etc.? (2) What does theological ethics have to do with public policy? (3) How does historical thinking help someone whose job is not in the historical field? All the courses were offered entirely **online**.

3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

The artifacts were evaluated by the program director in consultation with the course instructor. The evaluation involved one instructor for each course (i.e., one for HUM 2100, another for HUM 2150, another for HUM 3300, etc.). We used a rubric to assess the designated artifact from each course. (The artifacts are described in Section 2 above.) We used three criteria: 1) student does not meet standard, 2) student approaches standard, and 3) student meets standard. There are descriptions for each category above as they apply to the Student Learning Outcome. For instance, a student that does not meet the standard for SLO 2 “reaches simplistic and obvious conclusions that are based on questionable sources of information.” A student that approaches the standard for SLO 2 “uses information from sources with enough analysis to develop a coherent conclusion.” Finally, a student that meets the standard for SLO 2 “proposes creative and logical conclusions that reflect informed evaluation and scrutiny of ideas, data, and events.” Please see the rubric appended to the end of this report.

4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

SLO 2: In the Summer 2 2022 section of HUM 2150 (How to Think Critically), 100% of the students met the standard. In the Spring 1 2023 section of HUM 2150, 9% of students did not meet the standard, 36% approached the standard, and 55% met the standard. In the Spring 1 2023 section of HUM 3300 (Thinking Historically), 100% of the students met the standard. In the Fall 1 2022 section of HUM 3400 (Creative Thinking), 6% of the students approached the standard and 94% met the standard. In the Fall 1 2022 section of HUM 3450 (Interpreting Texts), 11% of the students did not meet the standard, 56% approached the standard, and 33% met the standard. In the Fall 2 2022 section of HUM 4800 (General Studies Capstone), 100% of the students met the standard. When reviewing all six courses in the aggregate, 4% of the students did not meet the standard, 20% approached the standard, and 76% met the standard.

SLO 4: In the Summer 1 2022 section of HUM 2100 (Intellectual Virtues), 11% of the students did not meet the standard, 11% approached the standard, and 78% met the standard. In the Fall 2 2022 section of HUM 2100, 19% of the students did not meet the standard, 31% approached the standard, and 50% met the standard. In the Spring 1 2023 section of HUM 3300 (Thinking Historically), 100% of the students met the standard. In the Fall 1 2022 section of HUM 3400 (Creative Thinking), 6% of the students approached the standard and 94% met the standard. In the Fall 1 2022 section of HUM 3500 (Writing in a Digital Age), 38% of the students approached the standard and 63% met the standard. In the Fall 2 2022 section of HUM 4100 (Engaging Difference), 17% of the students approached the standard and 83% met the standard. In the Fall 1 2022 section of HUM 4200 (Working for the Common Good), 33% of the students did not meet the standard, 33% approached the standard, and 33% met the standard. In the Spring 2 2023 section of HUM 4200, 13% of the students did not meet the standard, 13% approached the standard, and 74% met the standard. In the Fall 2 2022 section of HUM 4800 (General Studies Capstone), 100% of the students met the standard. When reviewing all nine courses in the aggregate, 9% of the students did not meet the standard, 17% approached the standard, and 74% met the standard.

5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

General Conclusions: Some of the data derives from very small sample sizes. The Spring 1 2023 section of HUM 3300, for instance, only had four students. It started with six students, but two of the six students did not participate in the course at all. Likewise, the two sections of HUM 4800—one in Fall 2 2022 and the other in Spring 2 2023—only had two students. It is great that all four students met the standard, but the sample size is very small. One other example is the Fall 1 2022 section of HUM 4200, which only had three students. One student did not meet the standard, one approached the standard, and one met the standard. The most reliable data is from the Spring 2 2023 section of HUM 4200, which had 23 students. In the aggregate, 15% of the students did not meet the standard, 15% approached it, and 69% met the standard.

It is also helpful to review the data by headcount. For example, the data for SLO 2 comes from a total of 51 students. Of the 51 students, 2 did not meet the standard, 10 approached the standard, and 39 met the standard. The data for SLO 4 comes from 88 students. Of the 81 students, 8 did not meet the standard, 15 approached the standard, and 65 met the standard. Overall, the numbers are encouraging when you consider headcount. Still, we need to assess these

numbers based on whether we were developing or reinforcing the learning outcome. Achievement of SLO 2 and 4 only happens in the General Studies Capstone (HUM 4800). In that case, all students met SLO 2 and 4, although the number of students in both sections was very small.

SLO 2: HUM 2150 introduces students to this outcome. In reviewing both sections (Summer 2 2022 and Spring 1 2023), 74% of the students met the outcome. I am concerned, though, that 21% only approached the outcome (not to mention the 5% that did not meet it). These students may not be sufficiently prepared to develop their analytic skills in HUM 3300 and HUM 3400. Some of the reasons for the weaker performance, though, have to do with students' failure to follow the assignment guidelines—as opposed to a weakness in grasping the SLO. I am pleased that HUM 3300 and HUM 3400 enabled students to develop their analytic skills. Of the 21 students across both courses, 20 students met the standard. This is encouraging as students pivot toward the final courses in the program, particularly the General Studies Capstone (HUM 4800). The most concerning data is from HUM 3450. Of the 9 students, only 3 students (33%) met the standard whereas 5 students (56%) only approached the standard. One student did not meet the standard. The results are disconcerting, particularly for a course focused exclusively on interpreting texts. We will assess this course again in 2023-2024 (for SLO 5). At that time, we will have three years of data. While we want to offer courses that align with the University's commitment to academic rigor, our concern is that the course may be too complicated for undergraduates; some see the content as more "graduate level." Potential changes could include different texts, more robust lectures, or additional resources that make abstract concepts more accessible.

SLO 4: We introduce students to SLO 4 (write in different styles, genres, and modalities) in CORE 1905 (Eloquentia Perfecta 1: Writing and Visual Communication). Students take four courses that develop this SLO: HUM 2100, HUM 3300, HUM 3400, and HUM 3500. In reviewing both sections of HUM 2100 (offered in Summer 1 2022 and Fall 2 2022), 16% of the students did not meet the standard, 24% approached the standard, and 60% met the standard. In terms of headcount, 4 students did not meet the standard, 6 students approached the standard, and 15 students met the standard. The results are not entirely surprising based on assessment data from CORE 1905. CORE 1905 enhances student writing, but it is a challenging course for a lot of our students. It is not surprising, then, that students struggle a bit in HUM 2100 as it is one of the earlier courses in the General Studies program. The results are positive for HUM 3300 and HUM 3400: 100% and 94% respectively. HUM 3500 is an important course in student development given the emphasis on writing in various digital modalities. Of the 8 students in the course, 5 (62%) students met the standard, and 3 (38%) students approached the standard. It is clear from the artifacts, however, that some students struggled because they did not follow the assignment guidelines or did not prepare adequately throughout the term. It is encouraging that 5 of the 6 students in HUM 4100 met the standard. This is particularly satisfying as HUM 4100 carries the Writing Intensive Core attribute. Of the 26 students across two sections of HUM 4200 (Fall 1 2022 and Spring 2 2023), 4 (15%) did not meet the standard, 4 (15%) approached the standard, and 18 (70%) met the standard. We would like to see an increase in the number of students that meet the standard, though we cannot identify a necessary change at this point given our analysis of the data, the artifacts, the assignment guidelines, and the rubric for the final essay. 100% of the students met the standard in HUM 4800, though we should note that the capstone course only had two students.

6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

- A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

Instructors enter qualitative information in their responses to the assessment survey. The program director also discussed the assessment results with various instructors in Summer 2023 and early Fall 2023. We went through the data and discussed variables that might have impacted the data. We also discussed potential changes whether pedagogical or curricular. We discussed the strengths and weakness of our artifacts, the required texts, the clarity of our essay prompts, and/or whether we needed to change our pedagogical approach (e.g., more robust lectures, synchronous learning opportunities).

- B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites

- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process

- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

We want to collect another year of data from HUM 3450, but we are considering curricular and pedagogical changes. While we want this course to align with the University’s commitment to academic rigor, our concern is that HUM 3450 may be too complicated for undergraduates; some instructors see the content as more “graduate level.” Potential changes could include different required texts, more robust lectures, synchronous learning opportunities, and/or additional resources that make dense, abstract concepts more accessible (e.g., building a glossary of terms and concepts).

We are going to implement a new data collection method to assess student learning. Instructors will complete a Qualtrics survey at the end of every term. The results from the survey feed into Tableau, which automatically calculates and visualizes the results. In conjunction with this new collection method, we *may* update the number of courses we assess for each SLO. It seems a bit excessive, for instance, to assess seven different courses for SLO 4. It also seems unnecessary to develop SLO 4 in four different courses, reinforce it in two, and assess achievement in the General Studies Capstone (HUM 4800). You could assign SLO 4 to every course in the program since all but one of the courses require writing as a final assignment. We need to determine where writing instruction accompanies other discipline-specific content. That is not happening in all seven courses.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

This is our second year preparing an assessment report for the new iteration of General Studies. We completely changed the curriculum. We started offering new courses (like those discussed in this report) because they applied to new or existing students in General Studies. For the first two years, however, most students in these courses were matriculating under the old Student Learning Outcomes. We finally reached a point in Summer 2021 where these courses were populated with students under the new plan and new SLOs. We completed the first assessment cycle this year; we have now evaluated all five SLOs. We will have changes to report in AY 2023-2024. Nonetheless, see the comments in section 6B.

B. How has this change/have these changes been assessed?

See explanation above.

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

See explanation above.

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

See explanation above.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., artifact prompts, rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document.

General Studies Student Learning Outcomes Rubric

Learning Outcome	Does Not Meet Standard	Approaches Standard	Meets Standard
Identify the political and non-political processes that make a difference in the civic life of our communities.	Expresses attitudes and beliefs from a one-sided view with indifference to civic engagement for the common good.	Begins to identify knowledge from political and non-political processes that is relevant to civic engagement for the common good.	Connects and extends knowledge from political and non-political processes as a sign of one's receptivity to civic engagement for the common good.
Analyze ideas, data, and events to reach informed conclusions.	Reaches simplistic and obvious conclusions that are based on questionable sources of information.	Information is taken from sources with enough analysis to develop a coherent conclusion.	Proposes creative and logical conclusions that reflect informed evaluation and scrutiny of ideas, data, and events.
Explain how ethical perspectives apply in various social contexts.	Recognizes basic and obvious ethical issues but fails to grasp complexity or cross-relationships.	Independently recognizes the complexity of ethical issues OR can grasp cross-relationships.	Recognizes ethical issues that are complex, multilayered, AND interconnected.
Write in different styles, genres, and modalities.	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, modality, and the assigned task.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, purpose, modality, and a clear focus on the assigned task.	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, purpose, and modality that is clearly responsive to the assigned task.
Integrate ideas and experiences across disciplines.	Presents examples, facts, ideas, or theories from more than one discipline.	Connects examples, facts, ideas, or theories from more than one discipline.	Synthesizes facts, ideas, or theories from more than one discipline to form reasoned conclusions or solutions.