

School of Continuing Studies: General Studies Program

Assessment Plan

I. Mission Statements, Objectives and Goals

Campus Mission Statement (to be revised)

Indiana University South Bend provides a learning and working environment that attracts and retains students, faculty, and staff; fully develops and challenges individual talents throughout the community; encourages free and spirited collaboration; and maintains a commitment to quality, integrity, and academic freedom.

General Studies Mission Statement

The mission of the General Studies Program is to assist each student to design and implement a coherent, focused and comprehensive plan of study leading to an associate=s and/or bachelor=s degree which achieves the traditional objectives of a university education and meets the student=s personal and professional goals.

Educational Objectives

The traditional objectives of a university education are:

1. Discipline specific knowledge and skills
2. Basic academic success skills
3. Academic values
4. Higher order thinking skills
5. Personal development and career preparation.

Goals

The goal of the General Studies Program is to ensure that students who graduate from the program meet these traditional objectives.

II. Methodology for Assessing Goals and Objectives

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Introductory Course

A one credit introductory course is required for students entering the General Studies Program with less than 75 credit hours. The course discusses the degree requirements, how courses transfer from other schools in Indiana University and from other colleges and universities, and the various ways that students can earn credit. Students are required to submit a plan for completing their degree which includes specific courses, an estimate of the cost and a timetable.

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Each general studies major must take a minimum of 12 hours in each of three liberal arts and sciences areas: arts and humanities, science and mathematics, and social and behavioral sciences. In addition, each student must select a concentration area from the above areas and complete 18 additional hours in that area. As a result, each general studies student must complete at least 30 hours in one of these three areas. The courses meeting these requirements must have minimum grades of C minus or better. These requirements ensure that each general studies major is learning discipline specific knowledge and skills.

We also strongly encourage our students to obtain minors, and many of our majors have one or more minors. These minors also contribute to students discipline specific knowledge and skills.

Basic Academic Success Skills (Fundamental Literacies)

All general studies students must meet five basic requirements by completing courses with a C or better in the following areas: computer, writing (two courses), mathematics, speech and world culture.

Academic Values

General studies majors must meet the IUSB general education requirements and they must take a total of 69 hours of arts and science courses (since there are a few substitutions possible, in some cases the total might be less than 69). We believe these requirements ensure our majors are exposed to academic values.

Higher Order Thinking Skills

All general studies majors are required to complete a minimum of 30 hours of 300 and 400 level courses. This ensures our majors are learning higher order thinking skills.

Personal Development and Career Preparation

Our introductory course requires the student to prepare a plan for completing their degree. Since students have considerable flexibility, they meet regularly with their advisors to make sure the courses are meeting their goals and the general studies degree requirements.

Capstone Course

In the capstone course students write four, three page papers. The first paper discusses the student's academic story. How did the student progress through his or her studies to reach graduation? The second paper shows how the student's program meets three or four goals of a good degree. The goals are selected from readings by Tom Ehrlich, John Newman, Nancy Vickers and others. The third paper shows how the student's program meets three or four individual academic goals. These goals are selected by the student from an article 'Educational Objectives Survey' by Thomas Angelo and K. Patricia Cross. The final paper shows how the student's program fits into the student's future plans. The emphasis is on occupational plans and plans for post graduate education. The second paper helps to document students meeting the traditional goals of a university. The third and fourth papers help to document students meeting their goals in personal development and career preparation.

QUESTIONNAIRES AND OTHER METHODS

Program Questionnaire

Students in the capstone course are in their last two semesters, so they are in a good position to evaluate the general studies program. A program questionnaire is given to each student and they are asked to evaluate the program. Steps are taken to ensure that the respondents remain anonymous, and the questionnaires are analyzed every two years which is after almost all of the students have graduated. The questionnaire is similar to the alumni questionnaire which is also anonymous. Since we graduate more than 75 BGS students each year and most of them take the capstone course, we get an excellent sample of our graduates.

Alumni Survey

Every five years we send a survey to each general studies alumni. Our last survey was sent in 2003 and we received nearly 180 responses from a mailing of about 2000. The survey asks 12 questions on various aspects of the program to measure the graduate's satisfaction with the program. Five additional questions ask about the amount of emphasis on various requirements as too little, about right or too much. Three open ended questions follow asking about post graduate education and occupational information, interest in working with general studies alumni to support the program, and general comments.

Graduate School

Ted Hengesbach estimated that approximately 25 percent of our graduates go on to graduate school. In our most recent alumni survey, 18 percent of our alumni reported having at least one graduate degree. Since preparing students for lifelong education is part of our academic values, we see the number of our students going on to graduate school as part of our assessment plan.

Grades

Since general studies students take at most two one credit courses in general studies, we see student grades as one way of assessing our students success. Every semester we receive from the School of Continuing Studies in Bloomington the average grade point average for all of our students enrolled that semester. We would like for this average to be above 3.0 for each semester. For the last four semesters, the average GPA has ranged between 3.10 and 3.25.

III. Process for Using Assessment Information to Improve Programs

Assessment Reports and Reviews

The Director will collect and analyze the assessment data and report the results along with recommendations for changes in curriculum and advising to the General Studies Faculty Advisory Committee every two years.

The Director will work with the General Studies Faculty Advisory Committee to prepare the Third Year Review and Revised Assessment Plan.

IV. Participation of All Constituencies

Faculty

The General Studies Faculty Advisory Committee will review the assessment report submitted by the Director and approve any suggested changes in curriculum and advising.

The General Studies Faculty Advisory Committee will participate in the preparation of the Third Year Review and the Revised Assessment Plan.

Students

Most general studies students have numerous one-on-one advising sessions with a general studies advisor. These sessions provide an opportunity for comments and suggestions regarding curriculum, advising or other issues.

Most students take the capstone course. As seniors they are in an excellent position to make comments and suggestions regarding the program. They also have an opportunity to evaluate and comment on the program through the program questionnaire.

Alumni

General Studies has a very active Alumni Board which meets five times a year with the Director and Assistant Director. Our newsletter is published twice a year and sent to every alumni. A spring event with alumni and graduating seniors is held every year. Changes in the program are communicated to alumni and they are encouraged to comment and to make suggestions. The alumni survey also gives alumni the opportunity to evaluate, comment and make suggestions regarding the program.

V. Record Keeping Activities

The Director compiles, writes and files the Annual Reports, and compiles, writes and submits draft Third Year Reviews and Revised Assessment Plans to the Faculty Advisory Committee. After Committee approval, the Director submits the reviews and plans to the Assessment. Copies of the Annual Reports, Third Year Reviews and Assessment Plans will be kept on file.

Capstone papers are kept on file for five years for possible review by members of the Faculty Advisory Committee and members of the Assessment Committee.