**GE AREA A2: WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

**SLO Evaluation Report July 2025:**

**Background/Description of GE Program ePortfolio:**

Prior to the 2017-2018 AY, departments/programs were responsible for assessing GE student learning outcomes and submitting a report every year for the GE Committee to review. This system had several weaknesses. Departments and programs were responsible for deciding which of the two to four outcomes designated for a specific GE Area to assess; thus, some outcomes were evaluated multiple times within a year and others were not evaluated at all in certain years. It was also not possible for departments to access and evaluate a representative sample of student work, nor was it possible to compare the results from GE courses in the same GE Area taught by different departments/programs, because each department/program used its own criteria/rubrics. Finally, the GE Committee was not able to review and analyze the GE assessment reports in a comprehensive fashion, since the committee was also tasked with reviewing all GE curriculum proposals, as well as with discussing and updating GE policies and procedures.

Therefore, Fresno State developed a proposal for a new system of evaluating GE student learning outcomes during the 2014-2015 AY. The proposal was approved by Fresno State’s Academic Senate in May 2017 and by the President in August of 2017. Essentially, all freshmen and transfer students admitted to Fresno State beginning in Fall 2018 would submit one designated assignment aligned to one GE student outcome from lower-division (for freshmen) and upper-division (for freshmen and transfer students) GE courses to a GE Program ePortfolio. Students will also write 300-word reflections (first-year students write three and transfer students write one) about their learning and submit these to the GE Program ePortfolio. The GE Program ePortfolio was set up by the Director of Assessment and students were automatically enrolled. Handouts, videos, and other resources that were posted previously to Blackboard were uploaded to Canvas when the campus transitioned from Blackboard to Canvas.

During the first year of implementation (2017-2018 AY), efforts focused on electing members to the new GE Assessment Subcommittee and on approving common rubrics to be used to evaluate GE student learning outcomes. Fresno State’s GE student learning outcomes were approved by the Academic Senate in 2010. These forty outcomes were originally to be evaluated on a five-year rotating schedule. With the addition of Area F to the GE curriculum, the outcomes are now evaluated on a six-year schedule. With the implementation of the new Cal-GETC GE pattern, effective in fall 2025, the future rotation schedule was changed by the GE committee to reflect the new pattern (Appendix A).

The ePortfolio submission process changed Fall 2023. The original ePortfolio submission process was creating difficulties for students, advisors, and faculty. Students were responsible for submitting the assignment designated by their professor. If students did not submit the assignments as required, their registration could be blocked. This caused consternation among the students. It also resulted in numerous consultations between students, their GE professors, and (especially) their advisers as they tried to meet the ePortfolio requirement. These meetings took time away from the primary responsibilities of campus advisors and faculty members.

These difficulties led to discussions between Kathy Dunbar, Assistant Director of the University Advising Center and the director of assessment. Ms. Dunbar asked if there was a way that the designated GE ePortfolio student assignments could be automatically submitted to their ePortfolio at the same time they submitted the assignment to their professor in Canvas. After discussing the possibility of this solution with JoLynne Blake, an instructional designer in the Office of Ideas, Ms. Blake and the assessment director reached out to the Canvas support team to determine whether this type of concurrent assignment submission process would be possible. The Canvas staff determined that such a process was technically feasible, and Provost Fu agreed to fund the conversion. The university contracted with Canvas to develop an assignment LTI that eliminates the need for students to submit the designated assignments to their ePortfolio. When GE faculty set up their course in Canvas, they designate which assignment is the ePortfolio assignment. When students submit the designated assignment to their professor, the LTI duplicates the assignment and seamlessly routes that copy to their ePortfolio.

The new ePortfolio system was successful and there are now a sizable number of assignments available for assessment in each GE Area.

In AY 2024-25, student work in Area A was assessed. The assessment process and the results for Area A, Learning Outcome 2, are discussed below.

**Area A2 Assignment Selection and Assessment Process**

**Area A2 (Written Communication) Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of an Area A2 course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate appropriate language use, clarity, proficiency in writing and citation mechanics.

2. Demonstrate effective academic reading strategies and processes, as well as critical evaluation of written work.

3. Recognize, analyze, evaluate, and construct arguments in ordinary language.

**Assignments**

A variety of assignments were available for Area A2 assessment in students’ ePortfolios. The two courses that satisfy the A2 requirement are English 5B and English 10, consequently all the assignments came from those courses. The Director of Assessment randomly selected 90 assignments from students’ ePortfolios. He read the assignments and assigned them to the A2 Learning Outcome that best aligned with the content of the student’s paper. The specific assignments that aligned with each of the learning outcomes is provided in the discussion below.

**Assessment Process**

The GE Assessment Subcommittee was responsible for assessing the student work. Committee members applied the rubric that had been approved by the GE Assessment Subcommittee before the first Area A assessment in 2018-19.

The assessment subcommittee met regularly during academic year 2024-25. During the meetings, the process for evaluating student work was discussed and committee members were able to ask questions about the assessment. Ten faculty members from seven colleges participated in the assessment. The papers for each learning outcome were assigned to two subcommittee members. Those members evaluated the student work individually and then compared results. If the two faculty members disagreed about whether an assignment should be rated proficient or not proficient, they met to discuss the evaluation and determine whether a consensus could be reached. If a consensus could not be reached, the Director of Assessment broke the tie.

**GE Area A2 Assessment Results**

**A2. Learning Outcome 1. Students will demonstrate appropriate language use, clarity, proficiency in writing, and citation mechanics.**

Students wrote papers on a variety of topics in English 5B and English 10 that aligned with this learning outcome, including:

* Rising gasoline prices
* The impact of COVID-19 on mental health
* Eating disorders
* Student use of AI
* Amazon’s job safety record
* Performance enhancing drugs

There were three criteria for evaluation of student performance on Learning Outcome 1. The first was for appropriate and clear language use, the second was for proficiency in writing, and the third was for citation mechanics. Students were classified as proficient if they were rated either advanced or proficient. Students were not proficient if they were rated developing. These were the results:

**Results for A2, Learning Outcome 1**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Language and Clarity | Writing Proficiency | Citation Mechanics |
| Proficient | 27/29 (93.1%) | 26/29 (89.7%) | 21/29 (72.4%) |
| Developing | 2/29 (6.9%) | 3/29 (10.3%) | 8/29 (27.6%) |
| Inter-rater reliability | 20/29 (69%) | 19/29 (65.5%) | 15/29 (51.7%) |

The students’ results were strong on the first two elements of this learning outcome, with 93.1% proficient on language and clarity and 89.7% on writing proficiency. These results are above and just below Fresno State’s 90% benchmark accordingly. Furthermore, 15 students achieved a rating of advanced from at least one reviewer on language and clarity and 12 received at least one rating of advanced on writing proficiency. The papers generally expressed the author’s ideas clearly—the main ideas and the supporting reasons could be understood. There were some writing errors, but they were not substantial and did not detract from understanding the student’s line of thought. The assignments did not rate as high on citation mechanics, with 72.4% rated proficient. A few students struggled with in-text citations and some students did not include authors’ names on their works cited page. Another problem is that several papers cited database where the information was gleaned (e.g. EBSCO), rather than the bibliographical information for the actual article that was used on the assignment.

Inter-rater reliability was 62.1% for this learning outcome, below Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%. For future GE assessment, it will be important to emphasize that professors are not required to assign a traditional academic research paper for their ePortfolio assignment. Any assignment that requires students to express ideas and cite sources would align with the learning outcomes for A1. Student work needs to be evaluated based on who well they met the learning outcomes for that GE area, rather than whether the paper would constitute a strong research paper.

**A2 Learning Outcome 2. Students will demonstrate effective academic reading strategies and processes, as well as critical evaluation of written work.**

Several English 5B and 10 assignments required students to read and analyze written work. Students analyzed texts pertaining to a wide variety of topics, including multilingualism in education, racial justice, Mexico’s deployment of planes to Israel, environmental damage, teenage mental health, and poverty.

There were two criteria for evaluation of student performance on Learning Outcome 2, proficiency in academic reading strategies and in critical evaluation. Students were classified as proficient if they were rated either advanced or proficient. Students were not proficient if they were rated developing. These were the results:

**Results for A2 Learning Outcome 2**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Academic Reading Strategies | Evaluation of Written Work |
| Proficient | 29 (96.7%) | 28 (93.3%) |
| Developing | 1 (3.3%) | 2 (6.7%) |
| Inter-rater reliability | 29/30 (96.7%) | 30/30 (100%) |

The results demonstrated an excellent level of achievement on this learning outcome, with 96.7% achieving proficiency on academic reading strategies and 93.3% achieving proficiency on evaluation of written work. These results exceeded Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%. Eleven students received a rating of advanced from both reviewers on academic reading strategies and thirteen students received a rating of advanced from both reviewers on evaluation of written work. The three assignments that were not proficient received a score of 2 (developing), rather than 1 (incomplete). The students were able to discern the main argument and central claims of the texts they were analyzing and apply appropriate standards to evaluate the work.

Inter-rater reliability on this learning outcome was 98.3%, exceeding Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%.

**A2 Learning Outcome 3. Students will demonstrate effective academic summary, rhetorical awareness, and analysis & synthesis of information.**

There were several English assignments that required students to incorporate sources, select information from sources purposefully, and make an effective argument based on the sources they researched. Topics in student papers included

* Effects of social media
* Comparison of Islam and Christianity
* Air quality in Fresno
* Water management in the Central Valley
* Health benefits of martial arts
* Animal welfare

There were three criteria for evaluation of student performance on Learning Outcome 3: effective academic summary, effective rhetorical awareness and perception, and effective analysis and synthesis of information. Students were classified as proficient if they were rated either advanced or proficient. Students were not proficient if they were rated developing. These were the results:

**Results for A2, Learning Outcome 3**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Academic Summary | Rhetorical Awareness | Analysis/synthesis of Information |
| Proficient | 29 (96.7%) | 30 (100%) | 29 (96.7%) |
| Developing | 1 (3.3%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (3.3%) |
| Inter-rater reliability | 22/30 (73.3%) | 25/30 (83.3%) | 23/30 (76.7%) |

The results demonstrated an excellent level of achievement on this learning outcome, with results on each criterion exceeding Fresno State’s 90% benchmark. A significant number of students were rated advanced by at least one reviewer on each criterion in the rubric: 21 on the first, 20 on the second, and 14 on the third. The student’s papers did a very good job of incorporating sources and using the sources effectively to develop an argument.

The inter-rater reliability for this learning outcome was 77.8%, below Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%.

**CONCLUSION**

The students performed very well overall on the assessment of Learning Outcome A2. On six of the eighth criteria for evaluation, the proficiency rating ranged from 93-100% and on the seventh, the rating was 87%. These results are near or above Fresno State’s 90% benchmark. The proficiency rating was lower for the eighth criterion, citation mechanics.

The inter-rater reliability was 77.2% across the eight criteria, below Fresno State’s 90% standard. This is below the inter-rater reliability for the other two Area A learning outcomes. The GE Assessment Committee should consider whether the assignments that faculty are giving in this area do not align with the learning outcomes (in which case, perhaps the learning outcomes need to be revisited). Alternatively, perhaps the rubrics need to be adjusted to align well with the assignments that faculty are giving for Area A2

**APPENDIX A GE Assessment Schedule Under the Cal-GETC Pattern**

AY 24-25 Subject Area 1 (English Composition, Critical Thinking/Composition, Oral

Communication)

AY 25-26 Subject Areas 2 and 5 (Mathematical Concepts/Quantitative Reasoning and

Physical and Biological Sciences)

AY 26-27 Subject Area 3 (Arts & Humanities)

AY 27-28 Subject Area 4 (Social and Behavioral Sciences)

AY 28-29 Subject Area 6 (Ethnic Studies)

AY 29-30 Upper Division Area 2/5, 3, and 4

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