**GE D2 Social Science SLO Evaluation Report July 2022:**

**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 Dr. Joseph Castro in August of 2017. Essentially, all freshmen and transfer students admitted to Fresno State beginning in Fall 2018 will 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 (freshmen 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 are evaluated on a five-year schedule. In the 2021-2022 AY, the Director of Assessment selected a random sample of student submissions for the three learning outcomes in Area D2, Social Science. The Chair of the GE Assessment Subcommittee selected two faculty members from the subcommittee to assess each learning outcome. The Director of Assessment collaborated with each team of subcommittee members to determine which assignments aligned well with the relevant learning outcome. The Director of Assessment then provided a random sample of assignments to the team and they applied the appropriate rubric to assess the assignments and determine student proficiency in each learning outcome.

**GE Assessment Subcommittee: Evaluation and Norming Process:**

The GE Assessment Subcommittee had previously reviewed and approved common rubrics for evaluating each of the three GE learning outcomes designated for GE Area D2. Prior to conducting the assessment, the Director of Assessment met with each faculty team for the purpose of norming. Each team member had independently reviewed a sample of student work and used the rubric to evaluate the work. Where there were discrepancies in the team members’ ratings of proficiency or questions about the rubric criteria, the Director of Assessment and team members discussed the reasons for the differences and reached a consensus on how to apply the rubric going forward. The director and faculty team also discussed how to apply the rubric in the context of a lower division GE course, given that the writing requirement for these courses is 1,000 words for the semester. The faculty teams then independently scored all of the selected assignments. After scoring the work, faculty teams met to identify common strengths and weaknesses. A third reviewer scored all assignments on which the two reviewers did not agree about proficiency.

**Student Learning Outcomes and measures (assignments) used to evaluate D2 proficiency:**

***Student Learning Outcomes***

Upon completion of an Area D2 course (Social Science), a student will be able to:

1. Discuss issues in the social sciences in their contemporary as well as historical settings and in a variety of cultural contexts.

2. Explain the principles, methodologies, value systems, and ethics employed in social scientific inquiry.

3. Discuss the influence of major social, cultural, economic, and political forces on human behavior and institutions.

***Assignments:***

Nineteen departments offer twenty-nine total courses that satisfy Area D2. The Assessment Team members and the Director of Assessment selected assignments that were best-aligned with each of the three D2 learning outcomes.

For learning outcome 1, the assignments selected came from courses in Africana Studies, Agricultural Business, Armenian Studies, Chicano and Latin American Studies, Child and Family Science, Communicative Sciences and Deaf Studies, Criminology, Economics, Geography, Industrial Technology, Political Science, Psychology, and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies. The assignments required students to discuss social science issues, including the Armenian Genocide, Brexit, Communication Modalities and Deaf Education, the Criminal Justice System, Economic Challenges in World Nations, Educational Underattainment, Energy, Technology, and the Environment, Family Size, Immigration, the Institution of Marriage, Mass Incarceration, Rehabilitation in the Penal System, Rent Control, Sexual Assault on Campus, Representation of Women and People of Color in the Media, Stereotypes, and Unemployment.

For learning outcome 2, the assignments selected came from Anthropology, Child and Family Science, Economics, Geography, Media, Communications and Journalism, Psychology, Sociology, and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Students analyzed social science inquiry related to diverse topics, including Cognitive Bias, Detachment from Work, Errors in Gift-giving, Evolution, False Memory, GDP as a Measure of Well-being, Hegemonic Masculinity, Human Behavior Over Time, Implicit Bias, Job Stress, Market Equilibrium, Maslow’s Hierarchy, the Meat Paradox, Objectification of Women, Parenting Styles, Patriarchy, the Production Possibilities Curve, Psychological Detachment, Social Cognitive Theory, Sociological Imagination, and the Suffocation Model of Marriage.

For learning outcome 3, the assignments selected came from Agricultural Business, Asian American Studies, Criminology, Economics, Geography, Industrial Technology, Psychology, Sociology, and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies. The impact of various forces were analyzed, including Cloud Computing, Culture, Education, Financial Literacy, Marital Conflict, Masculinity, Minimum Wage, Poverty, Psychology of Serial Murder, Rape Culture, Root Causes of Oppression of Women, Supply and Demand, Technology, Television, Unemployment, Virtual Reality, and White Privilege.

**RESULTS**

**Results for Area D2, Learning Outcome 1**

The evaluation of D2 learning outcome 1 resulted in the following ratings:

* Proficient 31 (88.6%)
* Developing 4 (11.4%)

Students were rated proficient if they scored 4 (advanced) or 3 (proficient) on the rubric. Students were rated developing if they scored 2 and incomplete if they scored a 1.

Inter-rater reliability was 94.3%, exceeding Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%.

For assignments rated proficient, reviewers made comments such as these:

* Includes discussion of cultural context
* Discusses multiple cultural contexts (gender, race, socioeconomic status)
* Clearly identified issue
* Discusses different nations
* Discusses multiple time frames
* Provided historical overview and modern history
* Long list of references

For arguments rated developing, reviewers made comments such as these:

* Paper very brief
* Did not discuss issue in different time frames
* Only current time frame provided
* No cultural context discussed
* Limited discussion of cultural context

In summary, assignments rated proficient clearly identified the social science issue, included a discussion of the cultural context, and discussed at least two different time frames. Assignments not rated proficient could have improved with a more extended discussion of the cultural contexts and/or a discussion of different time frames.

**Results for Area D2, Learning Outcome 2**

The evaluation of D2, Learning Outcome 2 resulted in the following ratings:

* Proficient 18 (51.4%)
* Developing 17 (49.6%)

Students were rated proficient if they scored a 4 (advanced) or 3 (proficient) on the rubric. Students were rated developing if they scored a 2 on the rubric.

Inter-rater reliability was 82.8%, somewhat below Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%.

For assignments rated proficient, reviewers made comments such as these:

* Explained the concept well
* Clear definition of the concept
* More detailed/nuanced explanation
* Included both conceptual and ethical or value-related analysis
* Critical analysis of the concept
* Discussed own experiences related to the concept
* Applied the concept well
* Cited multiple sources

For assignments rated developing, reviewers made comments such as these:

* Primarily repeated information from readings or lecture
* No clear definition or explanation of the concept
* No critique or personal reflection
* Analysis did not focus on specific thesis or main ideas
* Relatively brief discussion
* Did not cite sources

In summary, papers rated proficient defined and explained the concept with details. There was both an explanation of the concept and a critical discussion of the concept and/or discussion of how it applied to the student’s own life experiences. The analysis was extended and multiple research sources were cited. Papers that were rated developing did not contain a clear definition of the concept and the explanation was not detailed. There may not have been any critical analysis of the concept or personal reflection. The papers were relatively brief and cited few research sources, if any.

**Results for Area D2, Learning Outcome 3**

The evaluation of D2, Learning Outcome 3 resulted in the following ratings:

* Proficient 27 (81.8%)
* Developing 6 (22.2%)

Students were rated proficient if they scored a 4 (advanced) or 3 (proficient) on the rubric. Students were rated developing if they scored a 2 on the rubric.

Inter-rater reliability was 90.9%, exceeding Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%.

On assignments rated as proficient, some of the distinguishing characteristics included:

* Extended discussion of the forces
* Clearly identified and explained the forces
* Discussed both positive and negative impacts of the forces
* Provided strong examples of influences
* Considered diverse perspectives on the impact of forces
* Cited credible research sources

On assignments rated developing, some of the distinguishing characteristics included:

* Only addressed a single force (e.g. economic)
* Did not link force(s) to human behavior or institutions
* Limited explanation of the forces, how they affect human behavior or institutions
* The influences discussed did not focus on *human* behavior
* The analysis was brief

In summary, papers rated proficient covered at least two forces and clearly explained their impact on human behavior and/or institutions. The analysis was developed in detail, with strong examples. Some of the strongest papers included a discussion of both positive and negative impacts and cited credible research sources to support the analysis. Papers rated developing generally did not cover both elements of the learning outcome (explain the force and also its impact). The analysis was briefer, with fewer examples provided. The papers were less likely to cite research sources or the sources were cited incompletely.

**Disaggregated Assessment Data for Area D**

Disaggregated assessment data is an important element of a university’s Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) efforts.[[1]](#footnote-1) The assessment results for Area D were analyzed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine whether there were equity gaps in the results. For first generation students, 76% of assignments were rated proficient, compared to 69% of students who were not part of that group. For historically underrepresented students, 75% of the assignments were rated proficient, compared to 70% of students who were not part of that group. For women, 81% of assignments were rated proficient, compared to 63% of men.[[2]](#footnote-2) No students in this sample of assignments identified as non-binary.

The disaggregated data are shown in the following table:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area D Assessment Proficiency AY 2021-22** | |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Column1** | **Column2** | **Column3** | **Column4** |
|  |  | **Percentage Proficient** | **Significant Difference (.05)** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **All Students (n = 188)** |  | 74% | N/A |
|  |  |  |  |
| **First Generation** |  |  |  |
|  | Yes | 76% | No |
|  | No | 69% |  |
| **Sex** |  |  |  |
|  | Female | 81% | Yes |
|  | Male | 63% |  |
|  | Nonbinary | 0% |  |
| **Historically Underrepresented Status** | |  |  |
|  | Yes | 75% | No |
|  | No | 70% |  |

The disaggregated data are noteworthy because there was not an equity gap in the results for first generation students or historically underrepresented groups. About two-thirds of Fresno State students identify as first generation and Fresno State is a both a Hispanic Serving Institution and an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Institution. A number of General Education courses in Area D are offered by Ethnic Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality departments, giving our students a sense of connection that translates into positive academic performance.[[3]](#footnote-3) Many of the assignments from the different departments that offer Area D GE courses that were reviewed by the subcommittee provided students with an opportunity to use their critical thinking skills to analyze a social science issue or to select topics or historical figures of interest to them.

**CONCLUSION**

The results of the Assessment of Area D2 (Social Science) were mixed. For Learning Outcomes 1 (issues in the social sciences), 88.6% of the papers were rated proficient. For Learning Outcome 3 (influence of forces on human behavior and institutions), 81.8% of the papers were rated proficient. These results are near Fresno State’s benchmark of 90%. Conversely, for Learning Outcome 2 (concepts employed in social science inquiry), only 51.4% of the papers were rated proficient. For all three learning outcomes, the assignments that were not rated proficient were rated “(2) developing,” rather than “(1) incomplete.” Thus students were putting in effort on their assignments, but needed more assistance to reach proficiency.

For Area D overall (D1 and D2), the disaggregated data showed that students with first generation status and historically underrepresented status had a higher percentage of papers rated proficient when compared to students who were not in these groups. These differences were not statistically significant. Women had a higher percentage of papers rated proficient when compared to men and these results were statistically significant.

One question to be considered is why the proficiency results for Learning Outcome 2 were substantially below the results for Learning Outcomes 1 and 3. Possibly, concepts such as “principles, methodologies, value systems, and ethics” (Learning Outcome 2) are more abstract and challenging for students to comprehend and apply. Conversely, “issues in the social sciences” and “the influence of major forces on human behavior” may be more concrete and applicable to students’ experiences and background knowledge. It is also possible that fewer assignments in Area D2 were created to align with Learning Outcome 2.

There are common characteristics to assignments rated proficient across the three Area D2 learning outcomes. Proficient assignments covered the totality of the learning outcome content, provided strong explanations of the concepts, included a more extended analysis and application of the concepts, used relevant examples, and were more likely to cite credible research sources. Developing assignments omitted some elements of the learning outcome content, offered briefer analysis or fewer examples, and may not have focused on a specific thesis or main points. They were also less likely to cite research sources.

As noted in the report for Area D1, it is important to ensure that all designated assignments for Area D2 align with the learning outcomes for that area. The workability of assessing proficiency for each learning outcome (especially Learning Outcome 2) in lower division GE courses with a 1,000 word minimum writing requirement is another consideration. The GE Assessment Subcommittee may want to discuss these issues in AY 2022-23.

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1. . Ruth Williams, “Culturally Responsive Assessment, What to Tackle First,” NIOLA, December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . The difference between first generation students and students who were not part of that group were not statistically significant (.05 level), nor was the difference between historically underrepresented students and students who were not part of that group. The difference between men and women was statistically significant. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . Christine Sleeter, “The Academic Value of Ethnic Studies: A Research Review,” NEA, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)