Educational Policy Committee
Report to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
October 29, 1996

This report intends to inform the Faculty about the ongoing GER Assessment Pilot Project and about two changes the EPC is making in the form used to request new courses and changes in existing courses. The EPC is currently making no motions.

GER Assessment Pilot Project

As part of its approval of the plan the EPC proposed for the pilot project, the Faculty gave the EPC the responsibility for developing the details of how the project would be carried out. In particular, the EPC was to decide whether all GER approved classes would be asked to respond to the questionnaire, and, if not, what sampling procedure should be used. Below is presented the procedure recommended by the Assessment Steering Committee (ASC) and approved by the EPC.

Rationale:

The ASC and the EPC are proceeding with the Faculty approved pilot study of the survey methodology for assessing the seven GERs. The pilot study is designed to determine how well a questionnaire based methodology will work to assess the GERs. Using questionnaires, students and faculty will rate the extent to which courses approved for one or more GERs address the criteria used to designate the courses as meeting a specific GER and provide written answers to questions relating directly to the criteria. The former will be referred to below as close ended questions, the latter as open ended. A median portfolio methodology is both a possible alternative to use of questionnaires and a complement to the testing of questionnaires. If the survey methodology is explored concurrently with the approved pilot study, it will be possible to present to the Faculty results from both the pilot and exploratory studies.

Pilot Project Procedure:

1. For the pilot study, samples of at least five courses for each GER and each part of the two multiple part GERs (Natural Sciences and History and Culture) will be selected based on class size (small, moderate, large), lower (100-200) and upper (300-400) level, and department

or Area. Within these categories, a random sample will be generated. Several courses that satisfy more than one GER will also be included in the pilot study. Using this sampling strategy, the Office of Assessment will add courses to the pilot study until five instructors for each GER agree to provide the data requested in the second recommendation.

2. Instructors from courses included in the sample will be asked to submit voluntarily a course-based portfolio. The portfolio should include a syllabus, assignments, and exams with all course identifiers deleted. In addition, instructors will be asked to provide median student work for assignments and exams. The portfolio will include an example of the work of one student for each relevant (determined by the instructor) assignment and exam. The work in the portfolio may be that of one student or different students. The instructor should copy the student work, must remove student and course identifiers, and may remove any instructor comments. The Office of Assessment will collect the portfolios at the end of the semester.

3. The pilot study samples will be expanded as needed until five instructors agree to provide portfolios, or until the list of GER designated courses is exhausted.

4 A protocol for exploring a portfolio methodology will be developed by the ASC and the EPC.

5. Members of the EPC's newly constituted GER Working Groups will evaluate the portfolios and both the open ended and closed ended items from the questionnaire to determine how well the methodologies will work to assess the GERs.

6. Results of the portfolio analyses will be compared with the results of the pilot study. The comparisons will inform the EPC's GER assessment recommendations to the Faculty.

Changes in the EPC Course Request Form

The EPC will be making two changes in the current course request form in the near future. The changes are intended to help carry out the EPC's responsibility regarding curricular changes in line with current educational policy.

The first change concerns the EPC's inquiry about

change requires additional paperwork by the departments, but feels that the change encourages departments to think through changes as they effect the GERs and that the EPC cannot reasonably fulfil its oversight responsibility without the relevant new information.

Respectfully submitted,

Jesse P. Bohl, Chair
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Respectfully submitted,

Jesse P. Bohl, Chair
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