

# GEOC Meeting May 7, 2007

*In Attendance: Hedley Freake, John Bennett, Katharina von Hammerstein, Clare Eby, Anabel Perez, Dean Hanink, Robert Jeffers, Manuela Wagner, Felicia Pratto, John Troyer, Mike Darre, Tom Roby, Marie Cantino.*

Meeting called to order at 2:05pm.

Minutes of the previous meeting, April 23, 2007, approved with a correction to “wiki” technology. Wiki technology has not been used to get feedback from MATH department instructors.

## **Announcements:**

- New round of winning Provost’s Competition proposals. Total proposals: 13; 2007 Winners: 9. Total amount funded: \$80,000. From GEOC, Niloy Dutta and Manuela Wagner served on the review panel.
- Eric Soulsby supplied GEOC with a Spring 2007 Enrollment Report. 100-level Ws are 100% enrolled. 200-level Ws are 82% enrolled.
  - There are some 200-level Ws open to sophomores NOT fully enrolled.

## **Subcommittee Reports**

### Diversity and Multiculturalism

The CA4 subcommittee recommends **revision** of the following course:

PHIL/HRTS XXX Bioethics and Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives  
(The feeling of the committee was that they needed more information in order to approve the course.)

The CA4 subcommittee **does NOT** recommend approval of the following course:

CLCS 110 Introduction to Film Studies  
(The subcommittee felt strongly that the course is fundamentally not about CA4 criteria.)

The CA4 report was approved.

### Quantitative Competency

The Q subcommittee has drafted an assessment document for the GEOC’s review.

Discussion and questions:

- Are measurements appropriate for an assessment document?
- The measurements are to assess how courses emphasize particular algebraic structures.
  - The written Q measurements are not direct measures of student assessment, but are still valuable sources of information.
- Students can fulfill their Q requirements by taking low-level STAT or CHEM courses-how can the objectives be met in those courses?
- Measurements need to be directly correlated with the Objectives. As written, the measurements don’t match up.
- Reword: “Students will understand how and when to use basic algebraic structures such as...”
  - This would flow into testing particular to each algebraic structure.

- The Q document presented is a cross between an Assessment document and a Recertification document. Ultimately we need two separate documents to get two different sets of information: 1, does this course accomplish Q goals, and, 2, is the gened curriculum accomplishing our goals for Q?
  - How is this distinction to be made?
- Higher level Q courses with 100-level Q prerequisites were discouraged with the introduction of the new gened system.

GEOC recommends revision of Q assessment document.

### Writing Competency

The W subcommittee recommends **approval** of the following courses with the small revisions noted:

ANSC 256W Scientific Writing in Animal Food Products

ANSC practice has been to make the co-requisite ANSC 252 fully integrated with ANSC 256W, including the “F” clause. Therefore, if a student fails the 1-credit ANSC 256W, then they also fail the 3-credit ANSC 252. This was created initially to get through Senate C&CC, while increasing W capacity in the major.

HSMG 290W Internships in Health Care Management

Class size must be specified at 19.

JOUR 245W Specialized Journalism

“F” clause must be added.

MARN 295W Senior Research Thesis

Date for departmental approval needed. “F” clause must be added.

W report approved as written. Hedley Freake will meet with ANSC department head to discuss current W policy. A draft will be sent to Senate C&CC.

### **Assessment Proposal**

The Assessment subcommittee has submitted an Assessment Proposal.

Writing Assessment- seven next steps- discussion:

- Eric Soulsby has suggested these steps be done in different time sequence.
- Very important than Writing Coordinators should NOT be junior faculty.
  - How would Writing Coordinators be appointed?
- Is the \$5000 recompense amount reasonable for Writing Coordinators?
- Comparison across majors: some common points must be identified across disciplines, that go back to ENGL 110/111 in order to make data valuable.
- Depending on how departments structure their writing programs, Assessment representatives will be collecting student data at different times.
- Writing in the major writing samples will need to be collected along with second W writing samples.
- Many majors in the Engineering school are able to build in the two Ws into their major requirements. This makes W writing in these majors very different.

Information Literacy Assessment- discussion:

- Require freshmen students to take information literacy surveys prior to arrival on campus. (?)

- Emphasis on basic skills is addressed again in ENGL 110/111. Would have to be taken as part of ENGL 110/111.
- A cohort of students across university is selected to take SAILS at 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> years, with \$20 recompense following every SAILS.
  - Validity threats due to retaking of same test.
  - SAILS is a measure of basic information literacy, not advanced information literacy.
- There is room for improvement in the SAILS test to make the SAILS data meaningful.

#### Science and Technology Assessment- discussion:

- Approach suggested is to hire science literate grad student to ID courses that would be one of two courses non-science majors would take at UConn, then identify the learning objectives met in these courses.
- Student would look for questions on existing exams that would answer part or all of the learning objectives identified by the CA3 Assessment document. GA would work with instructors to build into exams particular questions to assess CA3 goals.
- Point 3: “in collaboration with ...”- who does this refer to? Eric Soulsby’s office might be approached for support for this effort.
- Learning outcomes may be too sophisticated to be assessable by multiple choice answer examinations.
- Assessment should not automatically exclude students/courses in those disciplines closely tied into areas to be assessed.

#### Resource/ Coordinator Position:

- \*\*Recommendation made that the Information Literacy and Science and Technology assessment plans be supported by funds and administrative support- a budget must be established to meet these needs.\*\*
- Release time rather than money?
  - Some small programs cannot afford to release their faculty.
- Three options for faculty coordinator position
  - Release time
  - Stipend- \$5000
- With CA3 assessment, it is academic year work rather than summer work.
- Assessment subcommittee needs somebody that can pull data together for the committee- a GA.
  - Would the GA be housed in the GEOC position office or in Eric Soulsby’s office?
  - This GA would be the “collector” of information from all the different assessment levels and would report to Katharina von Hammerstein, Anabel Perez, the Assessment subcommittee, and Eric Soulsby.
  - If there are any Assessment courses in the school of Education, a student from this area would be effective use of experience and time.
    - Higher Education Administration- Assessment focus.
    - GEOC to ask Scott Brown for more information.

#### Budget:

- Add a coordinator for Information Literacy and Science and Technology.
- For GEOC GA, start with a 50% GA, but with the caution that 100% will be need for the second semester.

- \*\*\*This will be rewritten to read: a PhD candidate to be a research partner, to use this as a dissertation project, and stay with GEOC for a few years.\*\*\*
- Total budget of approximately \$105,000.

Recertification:

- Taken out of this document.

**Next GEOC meeting:**

Fall 2007

Appendix to Minutes:

## **A Proposal to Begin the Assessment of General Education at the University of Connecticut**

**May 2007**

GEOC, and in particular its Assessment Subcommittee\* has spent about 18 months discussing approaches for determining the effectiveness of the general education program. Such assessment is difficult, given the size and complexity of the program and its integration with other parts of undergraduate education. In determining which approaches to recommend, GEOC considered:

- approaches taken at other institutions;
- the need to balance breadth of approach with the desire to collect data that will be meaningful and allow recommendations for improvement to be made;
- the need for faculty support, given their suspicions of assessment and the uses to which it might be put.

In general, GEOC's recommendation is to focus assessment efforts on restricted numbers of students in selected areas of the program. This will allow the approaches adopted to be of sufficient depth and complexity to allow conclusions to be drawn from them. As the general education program and its assessment evolve and questions in particular areas are answered, the focus can switch to new aspects of the program.

Initially, we propose three targets for assessment:

- Writing Competency
- Information literature Competency
- Science and Technology (Content Area 3).

In addition, GEOC is preparing a proposal for Senate consideration that describes a process for recertification of courses for the GenEd program. This process will include questions for faculty about which GenEd learning objectives they stress in their course and how they determine the extent to which these objectives are met. Thus, useful data will be collected relevant to course level assessment.

### **Assessment of Writing**

The subcommittee feels this area of General Education is worthy of an initial focus for assessment because:

- Recent revision to the UConn General Education system included reducing the maximum class size from 25 to 19 and requiring that all students take at least one W course at an advanced level within their major;
- A significant amount of resource is now committed to this portion of the curriculum; and
- CLAS is continuing to question whether their requirement for a third W course should be enforced or removed.

The General education Writing program can be divided into three portions.

1. The first year English program, primarily ENGL 110/111
2. An advanced W course, taught within a major program, designed to teach discipline-specific writing.

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\* Assessment subcommittee members are Scott Brown, Tom Deans, Hedley Freake, Dan Mercier, Felicia Pratto, Eric Soulsby and David Yalof.

3. An additional W course that can be taken at any time after first year English and in any field.

Each of these portions provides a target of opportunity for assessment.

Academic units have responded in different ways to the charge that they must teach writing to their majors. Some, such as Psychology, teach a required W course relatively early in their students' academic program. Others teach their W as a capstone course. Some departments offer a range of W courses and leave their students to select from them. Many departments have only one W course and leave their students to find the second wherever they can. By selecting writing samples from students in different programs, it should be possible to gather information about the effectiveness of these varied approaches.

A further advantage of this focus is that the raw materials for assessment should be readily available. Students writing samples are likely to be available from many programs and at multiple stages. This writing will have been done to fulfill various course requirements and therefore provide more meaningful data about students' abilities than artificial writing prompts. In addition, since there is likely to be universal agreement about the importance of our students developing the ability to write, this approach may dovetail efficiently with departmentally based assessment programs.

We propose the following steps:

1. Select 4-5 programs that teach writing in different ways and are representative of the institution. Potential programs are Psychology, Political Science, History, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Nursing, Engineering, Animal Science.
2. Identify appropriate places to collect longitudinal writing samples from the students. These would include freshman English. The sample size needs to be determined but should represent the full spectrum of academic abilities.
3. Appoint faculty writing coordinators within these programs. These coordinators, in association with the Writing Center, will develop rubrics for assessment of writing within their discipline. The Director of First Year English will develop the rubrics for that program. Some common items will be included within these rubrics to allow comparisons between disciplines and across years at the university.
4. Hire graduate students during the summer to assess these writing samples. These graduate students will require training in order to ensure consistency of rating.
5. Faculty writing coordinators, in association with GEOC and its W subcommittee will develop processes to survey representative students to determine their writing and reading practices and ascertain their views on effective instructional practices.
6. Evaluate these assessments to make recommendations for improvements of the writing curriculum.
7. Expand the responsibility of the Director of the Writing Center to lead and coordinate these efforts

### *Yearly costs*

1. Summer support for Writing Center Director. \$5,000
2. Summer support for writing coordinators within 4 disciplines.  $4 \times \$5,000 = \$20,000$ .
3. Summer support for graduate students.  $8 \times \$3,000 = \$24,000$ .

### **Assessment of Information Literacy**

Information literacy is taught at UConn at the basic level in ENGL 110/111 and at a discipline-specific advanced level within each major. UConn learning objectives are based on those developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). The Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (SAILS) is also based on the ACRL standards, thereby making it an appropriate vehicle for this institution. An institutional subscription to SAILS costs \$2,000 and allows unlimited tests. The test may be taken on-line. Reports are generated by SAILS and given by cohort rather than by individual student, in relation to national norms.

GEOC recommends the following:

1. Require all entering students to take the SAILS test online prior to beginning classes.
2. Repeat the test upon completion of ENGL110/111.
3. Recruit a cohort of 200 students to retake SAILS on a yearly basis until they graduate.

The GEOC information Literacy subcommittee has also developed a checklist for the use of departments in assessing advanced information literacy skills. This may be used alongside SAILS to provide evidence of instructional effectiveness within the majors.

### *Yearly costs*

Institutional subscription to SAILS. \$2,000

Incentive payments for longitudinal cohort.  $200 \times \$20 = \$4,000^1$ .

### **Assessment of Science and Technology Content Area 3)**

At this early stage of GenEd assessment, GEOC also recommends examining one of the four content areas, using a course-embedded approach. The GEOC Science and Technology (CA3) subcommittee has translated the criteria for inclusion of courses in this content area, which are based on what instructors should do, into learning objectives. Embedding questions on exams focusing on these learning objectives, or having students complete other activities where these learning objectives may be assessed, will form the focus of this course-embedded effort.

Since the GenEd program is responsible for helping non-scientists learn the approaches and ways of thinking of this content area, an approach using selected non-gateway science courses is recommended. These courses should have large enrollments to be representative of students' experience in this content area and might include BIOL 102, Foundations of Biology, NUSC 165 Fundamentals of Nutrition and PHYS 154Q Introductory Astronomy. GEOC recommends the following:

1. Request syllabi and examination materials from instructors.
2. Hire a science literate graduate student to review these materials for exam questions that assess the CA3 learning objectives.
3. In collaboration with the instructors, modify these questions or generate new ones to allow meaningful assessment of the CA3 objectives in a course specific but consistent manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Not required the first year.

4. Incorporate the questions into course examinations.
5. Share questions with other CA3 instructors, with the recommendation that they be modified to suit their course content and included in their assessments.

This approach should yield meaningful data about the extent to which CA3 learning objectives are being met within individual courses, allowing instructors to make improvements as necessary.

*Yearly costs*

Half GA for one semester. Approx \$5,000.<sup>2</sup>

**GEOC Recertification of Courses**

Part of GEOC's charge from the Senate is to develop procedures for the periodic recertification of courses to be included in the GenEd curriculum. This process can make a useful contribution to the assessment of the general education program by asking instructors to explain which particular learning objectives they have included in their course and how they determine whether students meet them. The regular work of the GEOC subcommittees would then become the review of these course recertification proposals, which would provide them valuable insight into how their section of the general education program was working.

**Overall support for assessment**

GEOC, its Assessment Subcommittee and its relevant content area/competency subcommittees will be overseeing and coordinating these activities. However, it will entail a considerable workload beyond what can be expected of GEOC faculty and its administrator. Therefore a half GA is also requested to provide administrative and technical support for these efforts.

*Yearly costs*

On half GA, level II. \$11,000

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<sup>2</sup> This would be a one-time cost. However, in future years, a similar approach could be used for the other content areas.

**Overall budget**

<b>Writing</b>			<b>Fringe</b>	<b>Total</b>
Writing Center Director		\$5,000	\$835	\$5,835
Departmental writing coordinators	4 x \$5,000	\$20,000	\$3,340	\$23,340
Summer GA support	8 x \$3,000	\$24,000	\$2,832	\$26,832
<b>Total writing</b>		<b>\$49,000</b>	<b>\$7,007</b>	<b>\$56,007</b>
<b>Information Literacy</b>				
SAILS subscription		\$2,000		\$2,000
Incentive payments to students	200 x \$20	\$4,000		\$4,000 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Total information literacy</b>		<b>\$6,000</b>		<b>\$6,000</b>
<b>Science and Technology</b>				
Half GA, one semester, level II		\$5,500	\$649	\$6,149
<b>Overall support</b>				
Half GA, level II		\$11,100	\$1,298	\$12,398
<b>Overall costs</b>		<b>\$71,600</b>	<b>\$8,954</b>	<b>\$80,554</b>

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<sup>3</sup> Not required in the first year since all students would be required to take the assessment.