General Education Assessment
2012-13

Humanities

University in the High School Program

The University at Albany, SUNY

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Background

In 2012-13 the University at Albany assessed the degree to which students were achieving student learning outcomes in the Humanities and Arts General Education categories. As with previous assessments, the assessment of General Education courses offered through the University in the High School (UHS) program were conducted at the same time. A representative sample of classes from the Humanities category was selected by IRPE and the General Education Committee. The UHS sample was chosen to be generally representative of the Humanities category rather than strictly random. The UHS office provided materials electronically, and IRPE redacted instructor information.

There were a total of 45 courses offered through UHS in 2012-13 that met the Humanities General Education requirement. Thirteen of those courses were selected for the sample, with respondents noting enrollments ranging from 3 to 39. Eleven of the instructors sampled responded. Of those, 2 respondents returned the beginning of semester forms with indications of class activities, as well as submitting an extensive syllabus, but did not submit end of semester quantitative data. The data contained in this report represents 9 classes, with a total enrollment of 147 students.

![Figure 1: Aggregated Performance on Humanities Learning Objectives](image)
Depending on the discipline, Humanities courses will enable students to demonstrate some or all of the following:

1. an understanding of the objects of study as expressions of the cultural contexts of the people who created them;
2. an understanding of the continuing relevance of the objects of study to the present and to the world outside the university;
3. an ability to employ the terms and understand the conventions particular to the discipline;
4. an ability to analyze and assess the strengths and weaknesses of ideas and positions along with the reasons or arguments that can be given for and against them;
5. an understanding of the nature of the texts, artifacts, ideas, or discourse of the discipline and of the assumptions that underlie this understanding, including those relating to issues of tradition and canon.

**Figure 2: Humanities Learning Objective 1**
2) Humanities courses will enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the continuing relevance of the objects of study to the present and to the world outside the university.

![Pie chart showing 54% Exceeded, 40% Met, 5% Approached, 0% Did Not Meet.]

Figure 3: Humanities Learning Objective 2

3) Humanities courses will enable students to demonstrate an ability to employ the terms and understand the conventions particular to the discipline.

![Pie chart showing 57% Exceeded, 39% Met, 4% Approached, 0% Did Not Meet.]

Figure 4: Humanities Learning Objective 3
In excess of 90% of assessed students either met or exceeded expectations in all five learning objectives in this category, though these figures are slightly lower than performance in the 2009 General Education Assessment in this category.

**Figure 5: Humanities Learning Objective 4**

**Figure 6: Humanities Learning Objective 5**
Figure 7: Comparison of Combined “Exceeded” and “Met” Categories, 2009 & 2013

Figure 8: Comparison of Results for Humanities Learning Objective 1, 2009 & 2013

1) Humanities courses will enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the objects of study as expressions of the cultural contexts of the people who created them.
Figure 9: Comparison of Results for Humanities Learning Objective 2, 2009 & 2013

2) Humanities courses will enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the continuing relevance of the objects of study to the present and to the world outside the university

Figure 10: Comparison of Results for Humanities Learning Objective 3, 2009 & 2013

3) Humanities courses will enable students to demonstrate an ability to employ the terms and understand the conventions particular to the discipline
In the Humanities category, comparisons of performance between the UHS and On-campus populations who “Exceeded” expectations in each of the 5 categories are dissimilar, with a range between 18 and 31 percentage points—and the on-campus population lagging behind on all 5 learning objectives. When students who “Exceeded” and “Met” expectations are combined, the on-campus population still trails far behind in all 5 categories, with a range between 13 and 26 percentage points.
We conducted difference of means tests comparing on-campus populations and UHS populations, and found that for all five learning objectives the differences were statistically significant at the .001 level, indicating that we can be more than 99% confident that the higher on average scores for UHS sampled students compared to those of the students sampled from the on-campus UAlbany population are based on systematic differences between the groups rather than just by random chance (whether those might be differences between the two groups of students or differences in how they are assessed is impossible to determine with the available data). These differences are also large enough to suggest that further study might be warranted.

In all 5 categories, the number of UHS students who “Did Not Meet” the learning objectives is 1% or less (the actual N=2 in a population of 203), while in the on-campus population, this number was between 10% and 14%. While slight variation across populations would be normal, and expectations of higher performance amongst self-selected highly motivated students might also be considered normal, the UHS population seems to consistently perform at a level that is far above that of their on-campus counterparts.
1) Humanities course will enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the objects of study as expressions of the cultural contexts of the people who created them

Figure 14: Comparison of Results for UHS and On-campus Populations on Humanities Learning Objective 1

2) Humanities course will enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the continuing relevance of the objects of study to present and to the world outside the university

Figure 15: Comparison of Results for UHS and On-campus Populations on Humanities Learning Objective 2
3) Humanities course will enable students to demonstrate an ability to employ the terms and understand the conventions particular to the discipline.

![Graph showing comparison of results for UHS and On-campus Populations on Humanities Learning Objective 3.]

Figure 16: Comparison of Results for UHS and On-campus Populations on Humanities Learning Objective 3

4) Humanities course will enable students to demonstrate an ability to analyze and assess the strengths and weaknesses of ideas and positions along with reasons or arguments that can be given against them.

![Graph showing comparison of results for UHS and On-campus Populations on Humanities Learning Objective 4.]

Figure 17: Comparison of Results for UHS and On-campus Populations on Humanities Learning Objective 4
It is important to note that the majority of students who enroll in University in the High School courses tend to be highly motivated and high performing. In fact, only juniors and seniors with an overall average of B or better are allowed to enroll in UHS classes. One could reasonably expect students who have a high average overall to perform well in these classes. Additionally, on-campus students taking courses meeting this General Education requirement may be doing so only to fulfill the General Education requirement, and that is a potential explanation of any differences in performance that may exist across these populations.

We also recognize that the UHS courses cover the same material as the on-campus offerings, but do so in a year-long format rather than the standard semester format. Additionally, the typical UHS course meets every day, not a few times a week. Both of these could be contributing factors to explain the high performance of UHS students relative to their on-campus counterparts.

Recommendations:

1) IRPE needs to work closely with UHS to improve the quality of the data submitted by instructors. Sample videos and an FAQ document that outline the General Education Assessment process and the use of the assessment forms have been created and will be rolled out for use in the 2013-14 academic year. Use of these will hopefully lead to better data from instructors.

2) It is possible that UHS instructors are transposing the high school grades into the General Education Assessment forms rather than keeping 2 grade books—one with the “high school” grade, and one with the “college” grade. Moreover, review of the assessment materials appears to show that instructors need to pay more
attention to separating out the performance of students in the class by learning objective. Most have simply inserted the same numbers into each category. IRPE recommends that the UHS office issue a memo each year explaining the process and directing instructors to the UHS produced videos and FAQ for more information.
Process notes

- This year the UHS office collected all the requested materials and scanned the sample documents into .PDF format before sending them to IRPE electronically. The names of the instructors were redacted from the forms, which were then coded. While this was a labor intensive endeavor for the IRPE office, it saved a substantial amount of paper, as well as additional copying time and paper when the material is be made available to the General Education Assessment Committee. IRPE has developed forms in PDF format that instructors can submit through our website, and they will be encouraged to use this method in the future.