General Education Assessment
2013-14

Foreign Language

University in the High School Program

The University at Albany, SUNY

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Background

In 2013-14 the University at Albany assessed the degree to which students were achieving student learning outcomes in the Foreign Language, Natural Sciences, and U.S. History 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. While traditionally a representative sample of classes from a particular general education category has been selected by IRPE and the General Education Committee, given the poor response rate in recent years the decision was made to sample the entire population of UHS instructors. The UHS office provided materials electronically for participating instructors, and IRPE redacted instructor information.

There were a total of 14 courses offered through UHS in 2013-14 that met the Foreign Language General Education requirement, with respondents noting enrollments ranging from 5 to 20. Nine of the 14 instructors sampled responded. All 9 respondents returned the beginning of semester forms with indications of class activities, as well as their syllabus, and end of semester quantitative data. The data contained in this report represents 9 classes, with a total enrollment of 105 students.
Foreign Language courses will enable students to demonstrate:

1. proficiency in the understanding and use of fundamental elements of a foreign language;
2. knowledge of distinctive features of the culture(s) associated with the language they are studying.

In excess of 95% of assessed students either met or exceeded expectations in both learning objectives in this category. This observed performance is similar to student performance in the 2010 and 2007 General Education Assessments in this category.
Figure 7: Comparison of Combined “Exceeded” and “Met” Categories, 2007, 2011 & 2014

Figure 8: Comparison of Results for Foreign Language Learning Objective 1, 2007, 2010 & 2014

Figure 9: Comparison of Results for Arts Learning Objective 2, 2007, 2010 & 2014
In the Foreign Languages category, comparisons of performance between the UHS and On-campus populations demonstrate results observed and noted in previous reports for other General Education categories—that UHS students consistently outperform our on-campus population. As always, we caution the reader not to draw too many conclusions from this data, as the sample sizes are fairly small, and a single large course can skew the results of the entire study.

When students who “Exceeded” and “Met” expectations are combined, the percentage of on-campus population trails behind in both categories – by 9 points for the first learning objective, and by 5 points for the second learning objective.

![Figure 13: Comparison of Combined “Exceeded” and “Met” Results, by Learning Objective](image)

In looking at, the number of UHS students who “did not meet” the learning objectives, for the first learning objective, 1% failed to meet expectations\(^1\). No student “did not meet” expectations for the second learning objective. In look at the on-campus population, this number was 5% for the first learning objective, and 2% for the second\(^2\).

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\(^1\) Note a limitation of the small sample size—this 1% consists of a single student.

\(^2\) In the case of the on-campus population, these N are 11 and 6 students respectively.
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 another potential explanation of differences in performance 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 in explaining the high performance of UHS students relative to their on-campus counterparts.
Recommendations:

1) IRPE needs to work closely with UHS to improve the response rate and quality of the data submitted by instructors. Sample videos and an online FAQ document that outline the General Education Assessment process and the use of the assessment forms were available to UHS instructors, but there is no evidence that any of the respondents actually used these resources to improve the quality of their submission. We strongly urge UHS administrators to continue to encourage UHS instructors to avail themselves of these resources.

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. As we have done in past years, IRPE continues to recommend that the UHS office issue a memo explaining the process and directing instructors to the IRPE produced videos and FAQ for more information.

3) IRPE recognizes the challenges in getting a good response rate from such a small population of courses, and also recognizes that one or two large classes can skew the results of the entire study. It is likely that we will continue to sample the entire population in the future, in the hopes that that effort – coupled with regular reminders from the UHS administration will result in a better response rate and a more robust data set.
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.