

The logo features a stylized mountain range silhouette composed of horizontal black stripes. The letters 'ETSU' are superimposed on this graphic. The letters are in a bold, black, serif font. A small 'TM' trademark symbol is located at the bottom right of the 'U'.

ETSUTM

East Tennessee State University



The Heart

of General Education Assessment

Honoring Faculty Hopes & Fears

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Criteria for Assessing General Education



- ▶ Supports improvement of student learning.
- ▶ Enhances teaching experience for faculty.
- ▶ Is justified in light of costs and rewards.

Assessing Vital Competencies



- ▶ Critical thinking
- ▶ Mathematics
- ▶ Oral communication
- ▶ Information technology
- ▶ Writing

Critical Thinking



Senior exit exam

- ▶ Annually since 1995

Embedded assessment in 23 academic departments

- ▶ Annually, starting 2005
- ▶ Accomplished through *Academic Quality Initiative*
(www.etsu.edu/aqi)

Mathematics



Senior exit exam

- ▶ Annually, 1995-2005

Embedded assessment in core math course

- ▶ Annually, starting 2006

Oral Communication



On-site evaluations of interns' skills

- ▶ 1998-2001; ongoing in Education, Nursing

Direct assessment of seniors' skills

- ▶ Every 3 years, next in 2007

Embedded assessment in core speech courses

- ▶ Annually, starting 2005

Information Technology



Direct assessment of seniors' skills

- ▶ Every 3 years since 2003

Embedded assessment in required computer course

- ▶ Annually, starting 2006

Writing



Direct assessment of seniors' skills

- ▶ Every 3 years since 2002

Embedded assessment in core composition course

- ▶ Annually, starting 2005

Beyond Competencies



- ▶ Humanities & Fine Arts
- ▶ Social & Behavioral Sciences
- ▶ History
- ▶ Natural Sciences

Proposed Process: Reflective Practice



FIRST YEAR

Identify course learning objectives

Describe how they are observed or assessed

Propose ways to improve assessment & instruction

FOLLOWING YEARS

Report on improvements made

Faculty Review of Proposal



- ▶ Proposal developed by team of faculty and staff
- ▶ Reviewed by General Education Advisory Council
- ▶ **Discussed by chairs of departments offering core courses . . .**

Objections



“If we must all have the same learning objectives, our academic freedom is at stake.”

“If we must measure everything, we’ll choose goals that are easy to measure.”

“If we must succeed, we’ll choose sure things.”

Fears



“Will we be able to teach what we care about?”

“Will results be used against us?”

“Do we really want to know what’s happening in our courses?”

Guidelines for Learning Objectives



Begin by listing objectives all course instructors endorse.

- ▶ Then create a list of objectives important to some individuals.

Guidelines for Learning Objectives



Some important objectives ARE hard to achieve; some ARE hard to assess.

- ▶ Please don't omit them or water them down; state them clearly and honestly.
- ▶ You don't have to guarantee success or formally assess everything.

Guidelines for Learning Objectives



Think long-term.

- ▶ One year after students complete this course, what do you hope they'll still know, understand, be able to do, value or believe?*

* Adapted from L. Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Pilot Process:

Introduction to Philosophy



Students will . . .

1. Understand how their views compare and contrast with other views.
2. Appreciate the value of philosophical reflection.
3. Think critically about core principles, ideas and beliefs that shape worldviews.

Pilot Process:

Introduction to Philosophy



Students will . . .

4. Identify the source of their most deeply held views.
5. Understand how their views compare and contrast with other views.
6. Comprehend challenging texts through active and critical reading skills.

Pilot Process:

Introduction to Philosophy



Students will . . .

7. Be familiar with important thinkers and problems from the history of philosophy.
8. Learn that intellectual maturity is gained through critical self-reflection and openness to the views of others.

Pilot Process:

Introduction to Philosophy



“This was the most in-depth conversation I've had about teaching in a long time.”

—a Philosophy faculty member

Pilot Process:

Introduction to Music



Students will . . .

1. Have a basic knowledge of music terminology, concepts and elements.
2. Know the relationship of music to general history, the other arts and culture.
3. Be familiar with major contributors to art music.

Pilot Process:

Introduction to Music



Students will . . .

4. Develop appropriate audience behaviors.
5. Develop skills to be lifelong consumers of music.

Pilot Process:

Introduction to Music



“I wasn’t very satisfied with these learning objectives.”

—a Music faculty member

Pilot Process: Reviewing Learning Objectives



Do course learning objectives . . .

- ▶ express your REAL hopes for students?
- ▶ focus on SIGNIFICANT learning?
- ▶ focus on learning you believe can LAST?

Pilot Process:

Intro to Music REVISED



Students will . . .

Develop skills to be lifelong consumers of music.

Through exposure to a variety of styles and genres of music, develop greater understanding of the common threads that connect all music.

Become more insightful listeners to music rather than passive observers.

Conclusion



Assessing general education invites us to . . .

face our fears

and

express our true hopes.

For More Information



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