

To: Bill Cook, chair, Educational Policy Committee
David Aday, chair, Assessment Steering Committee

From: GER 5 Working Group

Subject: Report of Evaluation of GER 5, Literature and the History of the Arts

The working group, composed of Miles Chappell, Art and Art History, Satoshi Ito, Sociology, and Linda Collins Reilly, Classical Studies, and chair of the working group, has completed the evaluation of GER 5 begun in August 1998.¹

The working group saw its role in this process as working within the language of GER 5 as approved by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in its vote of 15 April 1993 on the new curriculum. We did not attempt to make or change policy, and throughout our work we utilized our understanding of the language of GER 5 as it was established in the faculty legislation for the new curriculum.

The working group is confident that GER 5 is working well on the basis of the data and information both from the portfolios and the student surveys we analyzed. The response rates for both these methodologies were generally satisfactory. There were 115 sections of GER 5-designated courses taught during the 1998-1999 academic year. All students in each section were surveyed. The response rate for the student survey was 60% (2,026/3,395). Faculty members were asked to respond to a faculty survey and submit a course portfolio reflecting excellent and satisfactory student work. If faculty members were teaching multiple sections of the same course, they were not asked to submit duplicate portfolios or questionnaires. The response rate was 69% (63/91) for the faculty survey and 67% (61/91) for the portfolio analysis. This strategy eliminated duplication of survey responses and portfolio scores and reduced the workload of GER course instructors and working group members. All students enrolled in the GER-designated courses were surveyed. After the EPC reports to the faculty, faculty members who taught GER 5 courses will be sent summaries of their students' survey responses for each GER course and section they taught during the assessment. The working group in the course of its work looked at the data in various ways as reflected in the 5 tables presented here.

In general the working group felt that the goals were being met on the basis of the high percentages of "yes" responses for the 4 items in the student survey (Table 1) and of the high scores for all 6 items upon which the portfolios were evaluated (Table 2). Faculty teaching GER 5 courses were very sure that their courses were meeting the criteria, and the portfolio analysis confirmed this belief. (Tables 2 and 3). We saw freshmen and sophomores as the primary GER clients, but the responses of these students did not differ significantly from those of upper class students (Table 4). We did note that students from the upper classes had a lower response rate than freshmen and sophomores. The working group found the responses by class size an enlightening and reassuring statistic, since the larger classes seem to be meeting the criteria as well or better than the smaller classes (Tables 5a and 5b). In table 6, which shows percentage of student responses and portfolio ratings by department, the lower percentage of

¹ In the course of this evaluation and subsequent report, data and information were gathered and provided to the working group by Susan Bosworth, and we thank her for her invaluable assistance and unfailing cooperation.

“yes” responses for one department in the context of such a high positive response raised concerns which the EPC may want to address.

In its evaluation of the portfolios the working group found that the syllabus for a course was the most valuable piece of evidence for whether the course was well-designed to meet the criteria for GER 5. After our initial individual evaluations of the portfolios, we discussed our evaluations. There was varying interpretation on the part of the three members of the working group about how individual courses met the goals of the GER and we worked together until a consensus was reached. The items which caused the most discussion were #5, Introduction to at least two methods of analysis, and #6, Application of appropriate methodology(ies) for critical analysis.

RECOMMENDATION: Consideration should be given to re-working and combining items 5 and 6, Introduction to at least two methods of analysis and application of appropriate methodology (ies) for critical analysis.

On the basis of its consideration the GER 5 working group has a “good housekeeping” recommendation about the title of this GER. It is termed “Literature and the History of the Arts.” This seems to imply one emphasis for the former and another for the latter. Probably Arts & Sciences should consider retitling this GER as History of Literature and of the Arts without changing the criteria for GER 5.

We also thought it might be useful to indicate how a course that does not meet the objectives of GER 5 would be deficient, with some recommendations in specific points. We recognize that courses vary in intention and design. Thus we should be flexible and recognize the possibility that a course could be low—but not totally deficient—in some aspects but especially strong in others thereby making it acceptable. In general, a deficient GER 5 course would be distinguished by poor criteria in the following areas.

Forms of achievement: Deficiency: very limited treatment of important and influential forms of literary and artistic achievement. Such a course would be characterized by a narrow definition of a theme that focuses on mainly one form and that has limited theme which may be of interest in and of itself but which is not particularly significant and without impact.

Cultural context and the forms. Deficiency: very limited treatment of how important and influential forms of literary and artistic achievement both reflect and shape their cultural contexts. Such a course would be lacking in the method of establishing a cultural context and the relation of the art or literature to it.

RECOMMENDATION: A&S should modify the requirement that the course define how forms of literature and art “both reflect and shape their cultural contexts” because while such forms reflect their time and place, they do not always influence their time and place. We recommend that the course define how forms of literature and the arts “reflect their cultural contexts and define, when appropriate, how such forms shape or influence their contexts.”

Major developments. Deficiency: failure to introduce at least two major forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements. An inappropriate course would focus on no more than one genre, culture, era etc. A narrow course might be one that explored one genre or one era without reference to origins, innovations and legacies.

Methods of analysis. Deficiency: poor introduction to at least two methods of analysis, poor application of appropriate methodologies for critical analysis, or poor use of appropriate vocabulary of the discipline. An inappropriate course would be one that employed primarily one method, failed to establish a vocabulary based on the concepts of the form and method, or failed to demonstrate the applications of the methodologies by the students.

Throughout our consideration of the portfolios the working group was troubled by the identifiers left on the students' work, despite assurances that this would not be the case. In the future evaluation of GERS, this problem should be addressed carefully. The working group believes that the continued monitoring of GER 5 is a good idea, and is both useful and beneficial for the program. We urge the consideration of our recommendations outlined above, especially the one regarding methodologies.

TABLE 1: STUDENT SURVEY – OVERALL RESPONSES
Percentage of students responding “yes” to each survey item

Survey Item	Percent of courses with “Yes” response of		
	at least 50%	At least 75%	at least 90%
1. This course introduced you to at least two major forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.	100%	88%	66%
2. This course introduced you to at least two methods of analysis or approaches to the material studied in the course.	97%	79%	57%
3. This course provided you with the vocabulary of the discipline for analyzing forms, genres, eras, cultures or movements.	99%	79%	50%
4. This course taught you to apply the appropriate methodology for critical analysis of forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.	97%	84%	52%

TABLE 2: COURSE PORTFOLIOS – OVERALL RATINGS
Distribution of Portfolio Ratings

	not at all rating=1	Somewhat rating=2	Clearly Rating=3	could not judge
1. Knowledge of important & influential forms of literary & artistic achievement	0	2% (1 course)	98% (60 courses)	0
2. Knowledge of how important & influential forms of literary and artistic achievement both reflect & shape their cultural contexts	0	5% (3 courses)	93% (57 courses)	2% (1 course)
3. Introduction to at least two major forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements	0	0	100% (61 courses)	0
4. Appropriate level of vocabulary of the discipline	0	8% (5 courses)	90% (55 courses)	2% (1 course)
5. Introduction to at least two methods of analysis	0	10% (6 courses)	89% (54 courses)	2% (1 course)
6. Application of appropriate methodology(ies) for critical analysis	0	15% (9 courses)	84% (51 courses)	2% (1 course)

TABLE 3: FACULTY SURVEY – OVERALL RESPONSES
 Percentage of faculty responding “yes” to each survey item

Survey Item	Faculty Responses N=63/91*
1. This course introduced students to at least two major forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.	100%
2. This course introduced students to at least two methods of analysis or approaches to the material studied in the course.	100%
3. This course provided students with the vocabulary of the discipline for analyzing forms, genres, eras, cultures or movements.	100%
4. This course taught students to apply the appropriate methodology for critical analysis of forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.	98%

*Does not include duplicate sections taught by same instructor

TABLE 4: STUDENT SURVEY BY CLASS STATUS
 Percentage of students responding “yes” to each survey item

Survey Item	Freshman N=792/1,164	Sophomore N=697/1,177	Junior N=293/541	Senior N=244/502
1. This course introduced you to at least two major forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.	90%	91%	90%	92%
2. This course introduced you to at least two methods of analysis or approaches to the material studied in the course.	87%	86%	86%	82%
3. This course provided you with the vocabulary of the discipline for analyzing forms, genres, eras, cultures or movements.	85%	86%	91%	85%
4. This course taught you to apply the appropriate methodology for critical analysis of forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.	87%	86%	89%	86%

TABLE 5A: STUDENT SURVEY BY CLASS SIZE
Percentage of students responding “yes” to each survey item

Survey Item	Class size: Responses:	<20 N=281/438	20-40 N=1014/1731	41-76* N=345/588	>100 N=385/637
1. This course introduced you to at least two major forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.		92%	88%	91%	93%
2. This course introduced you to at least two methods of analysis or approaches to the material studied in the course.		86%	87%	83%	89%
3. This course provided you with the vocabulary of the discipline for analyzing forms, genres, eras, cultures or movements.		93%	83%	90%	86%
4. This course taught you to apply the appropriate methodology for critical analysis of forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.		86%	87%	86%	88%

TABLE 5B: COURSE PORTFOLIO BY CLASS SIZE
Mean Portfolio Rating by Class Size

Portfolio Item Extent to which criterion evidenced in portfolio: 1=not at all, 2=somewhat, 3=clearly	Class size**: Portfolios*:	<20 N=24/35	20-40 N=45/65	41-76 N=7/11	>100 N=4/4
1. Knowledge of important & influential forms of literary & artistic achievement		3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
2. Knowledge of how important & influential forms of literary & artistic achievement both reflect & shape their cultural contexts		3.0	2.9	2.9	3.0
3. Introduction to at least two major forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements		3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
4. Appropriate level of vocabulary of the discipline		3.0	2.9	2.9	3.0
5. Introduction to at least two methods of analysis		2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0
6. Application of appropriate methodology(ies) for critical analysis		2.9	2.8	2.9	3.0

*Includes 7 duplicate course sections taught by same instructor with different size

**There were no classes with enrollments between 77 and 100.

TABLE 6
Percent of “Yes” Responses and Corresponding Portfolio Ratings by Department

Department	Q1	P3	Q2	P5	Q3	P4	Q4	P6	P1	P2
Art & Art History 385/637 students; 4/4 portfolios	94%	3.0	87%	3.0	87%	3.0	88%	3.0	3.0	3.0
English 682/1117 students; 21/31 portfolios	88%	3.0	86%	2.9	83%	2.9	86%	2.9	3.0	3.0
Film 71/107 students ; 2/5 portfolios	96%		96%		96%		96%			
Literary & Cultural Studies 90/150 students; 4/5 portfolios	90%	3.0	86%	2.5	80%	2.8	80%	2.5	3.0	2.8
Modern Languages 276/474 students; 14/20 portfolios	90%	3.0	86%	2.9	85%	2.9	87%	2.6	3.0	2.9
Music 65/125 students; 2/4 portfolios	92%		69%		80%		74%			
Religion 222/375 students; 5/7 portfolios	87%	3.0	87%	3.0	93%	3.0	89%	3.0	3.0	3.0
Classical Studies 129/207 students; 5/8 portfolios	92%	3.0	81%	3.0	88%	3.0	88%	3.0	3.0	3.0

SURVEY ITEMS: Q1 - Q4 (Responses categories: Yes, No)

PORTFOLIO ITEMS: P1 - P6 (Extent to which GER criteria evidenced in portfolio.
Ratings: 1=not at all, 2=somewhat, 3=clearly²)

Q1. This course introduced you to at least two major forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.

P3 Introduction to at least two major forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements

Q2. This course introduced you to at least two methods of analysis or approaches to the material studied in the course.

P5 Introduction to at least two methods of analysis

Q3. This course provided you with the vocabulary of the discipline for analyzing forms, genres, eras, cultures or movements.

P4 Appropriate level of vocabulary of the discipline

Q4. This course taught you to apply the appropriate methodology for critical analysis of forms, genres, eras, cultures, or movements.

P6 Application of appropriate methodology(ies) for critical analysis

(No corresponding survey item)

P1 Knowledge of important & influential forms of literary & artistic achievement

P2 Knowledge of how important & influential forms of literary & artistic achievement both reflect & shape their cultural contexts

²P2, P4, P5, P6 had a single portfolio that could not be judged (Rating=0). The rating was not included in the analyses.