

GEOC Meeting April 13, 2009

In Attendance: Katharina von Hammerstein, Anabel Perez, Kayla Armando, Jane Goldman, Tom Deans, Robert Cromley, Mike Darre, Peter Gogarten, Xae Alicia Reyes, Bill Lott, Felicia Pratto, Elizabeth Jockusch, Tom Roby, and Niloy Dutta. Not Present: Cora Lynn Deibler, John Troyer, Dan Civco, Mike Young, Morty Ortega, Kristina Paul, and Murphy Sewall.

Meeting called to order at 11:33am.

1. Minutes of the last meeting were edited as follows:

- Pp. 2, 3: add, “and possibly an decrease,” to points about net gains in seats.
- Page 4: change “template paragraph” to “template language.”
- Page 1: add “(effective dating in PeopleSoft)” to Announcements’ “General Education Enrollment Totals.”

Motion to approve the minutes as revised. Motion passed.

2. Announcements

- *Provost’s Competition.* Eight winners have been selected from across 7 different areas: BIOL, CLCS, MUSI, NRE, ENVE, ECON, and MATH.
- *W Discussion in Senate.* Katharina von Hammerstein gave a presentation on the state of W courses and teaching at UConn, comparisons between UConn’s writing requirements and those of top twenty public universities’, and an update on GEOC’s W Assessment. In all, the Senate discussion was friendly and productive, with the matter referred to the Senate C&C committee. Katharina von Hammerstein will meet with the Senate C&CC to discuss next steps. The Senate C&CC is requested by the Senate to present a report to Senate in February 2010.

Points from the GEOC discussion:

- New theme in discussion of W courses: Ws are one of the few small classes that students are exposed to at UConn. How can the W concept be used in other types of courses?
- Political dimension: It may be worth making transparent the reasons some departments offer Ws while others do not. Historically, some departments chose not to offer any W courses. All departments are welcome to propose courses for inclusion in the general education curriculum.
- Per Katrina Higgins, CLAS advisor, only 20-25 students per semester have problems getting into W seats that warrant contact with higher levels of Deans’ offices. The majority of “W seats” issues are resolved before this point.
- GEOC should encourage departments that offer W courses to use the “waiting list” function in PeopleSoft to get an idea of true demand for W seats.
- Rumor: Grad students in the sciences are not being admitted to UConn if the department is not guaranteed 3 years of funding. Rumor. Rumor is false.
- Issue of the 2nd W, or W outside the major: Most were in agreement that a W in the major is a good thing. It is the 2nd W that poses problems.
 - Rationale for removing “P” listing. There was no continuity in feedback for writing in non-W courses.
 - A portfolio system of writing –e.g. 3 linked courses are offered in 3 semesters, and, cumulatively, they meet the W requirement- is a possibility so long as the department can articulate the plan as it pertains to the W requirement.
- *Learning Commons.* Katharina von Hammerstein had a meeting with Learning Commons representatives in the Library. There are several services offered in the Learning Commons which correspond with the Gen Ed competencies: Q Center, W Center, Learning Resource Center (Computer Technology and Information Literacy). What is not represented are services related to the

or augmented as the semester unfolds. Students will also receive detailed critiques of successive papers that they submit. They will be expected to show improvement in later papers on the problem areas identified in these two ways. Students will be required to submit an initial draft and receive commentary for the first assignment and invited to do on a voluntary basis for each of the other two.”

However, the W subcommittee has recommended revising this language to read:

REVISED “(3) The course may run on the portfolio system, in which students are to demonstrate improvement not exclusively by successive drafts of individual papers. For the first paper, the instructor writes a detailed critique of a draft that serves as both a guide for revising that paper and as a diagnostic tool to sharpen students’ self-revision techniques for future papers. For the papers that follow, students are expected to carry out revision based on the instructor’s critiques of earlier papers in the course; they will also receive written feedback with the grade and have the opportunity to revise and resubmit. For all the major writing assignments some class discussion and/or exercises will address writing in process.”

One member of the W subcommittee is unable to recommend approval of the two proposed courses even with the revised language. The W subcommittee is turning the matter over to GEOC.

Therefore, the W subcommittee recommends **approval of the following courses PENDING revision** of section 3 and clarification/revision of two other minor points:

ENGL 2408W	Modern Drama
ENGL 2411W	Popular Literature

Clarifications/revisions needed:

ENGL 2408W:

- Will the class be open to freshmen, or do they want to add open to sophomores or higher?
- Have to add not open to students who have passed 3406.

ENGL 2411W:

- Will the class be open to freshmen, or do they want to add open to sophomores or higher?

GEOC discussion

- In W courses, what constitutes “revision?” Does providing “opportunities” for revision rather than “requiring” revision meet the general spirit of the W guidelines?
- The revised language sounds like there is no penalty for not doing revision.
- The ENGL dept is proposing a portfolio type of course, with the second paper taking into account the feedback from the first paper, the third written with feedback from the second, etc. In their plan, one paper builds from the previous.
- Approval of this W justification language may be a slippery slope. How do you really enforce that students have paid attention to revision in this framework?
- The idea of a dialogic process is good as students are expected to, and are graded on, the incorporation of prior feedback.
- For the two proposals under consideration, the ENGL department has stated that students cannot hand in the last two papers without some revision even if the instructor does not see a draft.
- Still a concern on GEOC is that the 15 pages of revision explicitly noted in the W criteria might not happen under this structure. There is real concern about the precedent this sets for other departments.
- The idea of “timely revision” needs to be clearly articulated. The syllabi for the two courses spell out the opportunity for revision.
- Larger W requirement question: if a student is offered the opportunity to revise and opts not to, should they fail the course?

Motion to approve ENGL 2408W and ENGL 2411W pending revision of W justification language and the clarification of the minor items noted above. Motion passed with five votes for, two votes against, and four abstentions.

Assessment Subcommittee

The Assessment subcommittee decided that, provided there is funding in FY10, CA3 will move into the third phase of assessment doing concrete assessment of student artifacts. One way to undertake this would be embedded assessment (e.g., in homework, midterms, finals) of student learning outcomes.

Other CAs/Comps:

- CA4 will begin phase two of assessment in the coming year.
- CA2 will start phase one of assessment in the coming year.
- W will continue with W-in-the-major assessment of two more majors.
 - Will the W assessment be linked with Senate C&CC effort?
 - The Assessment subcommittee wants to stick with the initial plan of assessment of W in the disciplines as it is unclear at this point for what the Senate C&CC will be looking.

4. Reports and Discussion

Substitutions

In 2004, the Senate passed a motion to give School/College deans the explicit authority to make substitutions to the new general education curriculum. At the time, Continuing Studies was a college; it is now a center reporting to the Vice Provost. Because the Bachelor of General Studies is run out of CCS, students in the BGS program have no dean to which they can appeal for substitutions.

Questions posed to GEOC:

- What does GEOC recommend regarding this program?
- Should these substitutions be done through the Provost's Office (V. Makowsky)?
- Should authority be granted to director to approve substitutions?

The consensus on GEOC is that Vice Provost V. Makowsky should be considered "dean" for this program. Substitutions for BGS students, then, would be done through the office of the Vice Provost.

Change in Gen Ed Guidelines to be added to the end of Part A.3.f.: "For undergraduate programs that have no dean, the cognizant office to make substitutions is the Vice Provost office."

5. Monitoring and Assessment

Recertification/Re-approval

Monitoring of general education courses is necessary to ensure that they continue to adhere to the general education criteria for which they were approved. Katharina von Hammerstein proposed to VP Makowsky that, in light of departments being already overburdened with budget woes, recertification be postponed for one academic year. However, VP Makowsky does not wish to delay further and is looking for the following timeline: Fall 2009 creation of recertification procedure and form, Spring 2010 testing implementation of the procedure and form, Fall 2010 formal implementation of the procedure and form.

Options for recertification:

1. Two tiered system: "quick and dirty" for the bulk of courses, in-depth review of a few.
2. "Quick in dirty" review for all courses.
3. In-depth review for all courses.

Recertification considerations, from previous discussion on this topic:

Our discussion on RE-CERTIFICATION so far

Katharina von Hammerstein (10/1/08)

GEOC's MANDATE: "monitoring periodically courses that satisfy General Education Requirements to ensure that they continue to meet the criteria adopted by the Senate" (*Gen Ed Guidelines, p. 5*). Thus, assessment and re-certification.

GOALS of re-certification:

- ensuring that **current delivery** (+ evidence) still meets the respective Gen Ed criteria
- **reminding instructors** of the original course design (Gen Ed course!) which was approved to meet the respective Gen Ed criteria
- overall: **ensuring and even improving high standard of teaching and learning** in UConn's Gen Ed program

TIME FRAME for the RE-CERTIFICATION ***FORM and PROCEDURE***

- to be in place by the end of 2008/09

OPEN CONCEPTUAL QUESTIONS (overlapping with practical questions)

- **two-tiered system?**
 - 1) **brief** review of ALL courses (short & simple form; check-off boxes; appended evidence)
 - 2) **in-depth** review of SOME courses [how many? Percentage? Selection criteria? At random – would that be fear tactics? Is in-depth review business of assessment rather than re-certification?]
- form: **part 1:** about Gen Ed in **general**
part 2: **specific** to CA or Competency (W may develop addl. form for departmental plan)
part 3: **evidence**, e.g., exams; instructions for papers, lab reports, presentations, homework; syllabi? [Q was opposed to collecting syllabi]
- linkage of **re-certification** with elements of **assessment**
 - which information does GEOC need for re-certification? Which assessment information might be useful in addition? Which amount of data can GEOC handle (see below)? Should we stick mostly to re-certification and add only essential assessment items?
 - re-certification is not the only form of Gen Ed assessment at UConn
 - re-certification must be comprehensive, assessment looks at samples
 - questions about student learning outcomes and assessment methods?
- Approaching **departments or instructors?**
 - Does one re-certification form suffice, if course is taught by more than one instructor?
 - Is evidence to be requested from one instructor or all that teach a given course?
 - Are student learning outcomes and assessment methods instructor-specific?
 - If we decided for multiple forms, would dept. or GEOC collect them?
- Differentiation between Storrs campus and regional campuses?
- **self-ranking** of instructor = mapping alignment of course design with student learning outcomes / criteria for course approval (see CA3 report 1: not at all, 2: barely, 3: sometimes, 4: thoroughly)? [Would this be useful? We have student learning outcomes listed only for CA 2, 3, 4, not yet for CA1, Q, W]
 - to which extent does course address student learning outcomes which are based on the criteria for course approval in the given CA and/or Comp
 - to which extent does course assess student learning outcomes which are based on the criteria for course approval in the given CA and/or Competency

OPEN PRACTICAL QUESTIONS (overlapping with conceptual questions)

- re-certification form **on line**; can Anabel develop form? If UITS, do we get funding?
- **rotation** system?
 - after how many years should a course be up for recertification?
 - schedule: eg., asking for brief recertification of 2004 courses in Sept 09; deadline Nov. 1? In-depth by Feb 1, 10; re-certification through GEOC by late Mar '10? No Senate CCC and Senate needed, right?

- *Q would like to receive *all* Q course forms and some exams at the same time: schedule?*
- **statistical questions** need not be in form but can be obtained **from OIR**
- what is **realistic/doable** for **departments/instructors**?
- what collection, processing, and evaluation of data is **needed and doable for GEOC**?
- **Sunset Law** (to ensure we'll actually get forms back):
 - If GEOC's re-certification request for a given course is not answered by a set date, the course gets removed from the list of Gen Ed courses. [GEOC should be generous with reminders; otherwise we get a giant mess of canceling and uncanceling approvals and courses]
- **test of draft form** with a cross-section of courses

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

- include questions to students?

COVER LETTER

- GEOC's mandate
- Goals of re-certification
- procedure and relevant attachments/URLs
- quick form; at random course may be subject to in-depth inquiry [?]
- if course is listed for several Content Areas and/or Competencies, separate forms
- schedule
- sunset law

RESOURCES?

- re-certification coordinator?
- ED-PSYC Ph.D. to gather and make sense of data?

Current Discussion:

- Recertification vs. Assessment: One GEOC member supports keeping assessment separate from recertification. Others suggested that there be a "productive muddle" between assessment and recertification.
- Forms: If a department is willing to certify that a course continues to meet the original learning objectives presented when the course was first approved, then the form should be very short.
 - Some departments could decide to forgo the original gen ed courses in favor of new courses, if the documentation for recertifying courses becomes too cumbersome.
- Trust: Some on GEOC believe we should trust that departments are doing what they say they are doing in their recertification documents. Others recommend requiring submission of syllabi to review that courses still meet the original guidelines.
- There are no "sunset" rules for general education courses in the guidelines. If we wished to make GEOC approval valid for only a certain number of years before requiring recertification, GEOC would have to recommend this change to the Senate.
- One possible way to start recertification is by identifying the gen ed courses that have the most enrollment and which, therefore, touch the most students.
- A staggered recertification process will make the most sense in light of GEOC capacity. The details of this staggering need to be sorted out.

Meeting adjourned at 1:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anabel Perez
GEOC Administrator