

# UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE FOR GENERAL EDUCATION

## MEETING MINUTES

DECEMBER 7, 2022

VIA ZOOM: <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/84229621673>

2:30 PM – 3:45 PM

**Present:** Angela Anderson, Aaron Ansell, Stephen Biscotte, Aaron Goldstein, Corinne Guimont, Molly Hall, Janet Hilder, Victoria Lael, Jason Malone, Nicole Pitterson, Annie Ronan, Hannah Shinault, Jeremy Sudweeks, Khanh Ngoc Tran, Zach Underwood, Sparkle Williams

**Absent:** Molly Coogan, Briana Ermanni, Earl Kline

**Guests:** Jenni Gallagher

Call to order by Hannah Shinault at 2:30 pm

Announcements:

- The first spring meeting will be the full committee meeting on 2/1/23. Subcommittee meetings will not be held on 1/18/23.
- Save the date for the 2023 Summer Institute: May 17-18.

### 1. Special Study Reviews

Review of [ART 3954: Experiential Learning with Creative Technologies: Visualizing the First World War in Europe](#) for Pathways concept 2 (Critical Thinking in the Humanities.)

The committee delayed a vote on the proposal, requesting additional information from the proposers.

### 2. Pathways Program Revision

The committee discussed the feedback (see Appendix) on the proposal to streamline the Pathways student learning outcomes (SLOs). While the majority of the feedback was favorable, the committee acknowledged the substantial concerns raised by those opposed to the changes. Therefore, they will not move forward with revising the SLOs at this time and will instead explore other options for reducing the assessment burden, such as 1) moving to an assessment cycle (e.g., instructors would only be required to submit data once every three years) and 2) eliminating the requirement to submit assessment data for summer sessions.

### 3. Subcommittee Reports

#### Advising

The advising subcommittee has been working on a survey to ask advisors about their challenges and needs related to Pathways. They have drafted the questions and plan to finalize and disseminate the survey in the spring.

Meeting adjourned by Hannah Shinault at 3:29.

*Minutes compiled by Jenni Gallagher*

## Appendix

### Feedback on Proposed Pathways Revisions November 21, 2022

#### Background

To open a community discussion on potential options for reducing the amount of assessment required of instructors, the University Curriculum Committee for General Education (UCCGE) drafted a preliminary proposal for streamlining the Pathways student learning outcomes (SLOs). This proposal sought to address the following goals established by the UCCGE:

1. increasing faculty participation in assessment,
2. improving the accuracy of the submitted data, and
3. better demonstrating the value of assessment to the university community.

It also aimed to address feedback from Pathways instructors that the current amount of assessment is a burden, especially for adjunct instructors and graduate students who may not have access to the same support and resources as full-time faculty.

The proposal suggested simplifying the [assessment process](#) by reducing all concepts to three student learning outcomes, with the requirement that two of the three be assessed. Currently, the number of student learning outcomes varies by concept, and courses must assess a majority of the SLOs within each concept (except for Discourse, which requires all five concepts to be assessed).

To determine whether this proposal offered a viable means for simplifying the assessment process and increasing participation and data quality, committee members requested feedback from their constituencies. By the close of the survey, less than 50 responses had been received and some colleges had not yet participated, so the committee extended the deadline to gather a broader array of input. This updated report includes a total of 118 responses from seven colleges and University Studies (see Table 1). The proposal [can be accessed here](#).

*Table 1: Responses by College/Unit*

College/Unit	% of total responses
College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences	39%
College of Architecture, Arts, and Design	29%
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	10%
College of Science	8%
Pamplin College of Business	4%
College of Engineering	7%
College of Natural Resources and Environment	2%
University Studies	1%

## General Results

Two-thirds of respondents were in favor of the proposal (See Table 2), either in full (57%) or in part (9%). Thirty percent of respondents were opposed, with a significant number of that group expressing vehement opposition.

*Table 2: Support for Streamlining Pathways SLOs*

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Support	57%
Do not support	30%
Partial support	9%
No strong preference indicated	3%

Those in favor of the proposal, many of whom teach Pathways courses themselves, appreciated the effort to reduce the amount of assessment required of instructors. In addition to decreasing already-overburdened workloads, it was suggested that reducing the number of SLOs would clarify the objectives of the program and would allow instructors to focus more of their time on teaching and supporting students. One respondent noted that the proposal would not change what instructors could teach in their courses, it would just decrease the amount of assessment data they have to submit.

The responses indicated overwhelming support for less assessment, with numerous respondents thanking the committee for bringing this proposal forward. Several respondents suggested that these changes would make a good start, but that even more should be done to reduce assessment.

The 9% of respondents who indicated partial support were in favor of reducing the number of SLOs for some—but not all—of the concepts.

Those opposed to the proposal cite concerns over maintaining the integrity of the curriculum. Multiple respondents argued that reducing the number of SLOs would weaken course requirements and, subsequently, the quality of students' general education, and that such a change would prioritize assessment over learning.

Others expressed significant concern that reducing the SLOs would open the door for disciplinary "poaching," in which departments create courses that are outside of their own disciplines to keep their majors in-house. This concern was expressed most pointedly in regards to Critical Thinking in the Humanities and Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts, which some respondents felt were especially vulnerable to poaching.

Additional opposition was raised regarding the timing of program revisions. A few respondents noted that Pathways is still relatively new, and more data may be needed before instituting any changes.

In summary, the survey results suggest that revision of the assessment process should continue to be considered, but that these particular curricular revisions may need to be reconsidered.