

**General Education Assessment
Category 7: Human Diversity
Committee Report**

Background

According to the 2002-2003 General Education & Cultural Diversity Bulletin at Minnesota State University, Mankato, students are required to meet Category 7: Human Diversity by completing **only one course** of three credits or more from 30 Core diversity courses offered in the following 15 departments:

- Communication Disorders
- Elementary and Early Childhood Education
- English
- Ethnic Studies
- Gerontology
- History
- Humanities
- K-12 and Secondary Programs
- Music
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Speech-Hearing and Rehabilitation
- Sociology
- Theatre
- Women's Studies

Identified Outcomes of Category 7

The goal of this requirement is to increase students' understanding of

1. individual and group differences, emphasizing the dynamics of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, and/or disabilities in the history and culture of diverse groups in the United States;
2. the contributions of pluralism to United States society and culture; and
3. the historical and contemporary responses of the United States to group differences.

Following completion of Category 7 of the General Education program, students will be able to

- a) understand the development of and the changing meanings of group identities in the United States' history and culture;
- b) demonstrate an awareness of the individual and institution dynamics of unequal power relations between groups in contemporary society;
- c) analyze and evaluate their own attitudes, behaviors, concepts, and beliefs regarding diversity, racism, and bigotry;
- d) describe and discuss the experience and contributions (political, social, economic, artistic, humanistic, etc.) of the many groups that shape American society and culture, in particular those groups which have suffered discrimination and exclusion;
- e) demonstrate communication skills necessary for living and working effectively in a society with great population diversity.

Relation to University Mission and Goals

MSU's mission statement is "Minnesota State University, Mankato promotes learning through effective undergraduate and graduate teaching, scholarship, and research in service to the state, the region and the global community." The University's strategic plan includes an initiative for promoting diversity across all levels of the University community. Ideally, Category 7 of General Education would support this goal.

Population

Students whose identification numbers ended in 7 were selected from 32 different Category 7 general education courses or sections during the Spring 2002 and Fall 2002 semesters. Of the 25 instructors notified that their courses were to be included in the assessment process, eight chose not to submit materials. In a few instances, identified courses did not contain students whose identification number met the selection criteria, or the courses were not offered during the evaluation period. The selected population generated more than **500** samples that included essay examinations, multiple-choice examinations, journals, essays, reflection papers, activities, analyses, interviews, and portfolios.

Courses Evaluated

CDIS 290: Introduction to Communication Disorders
EDFN 222: Human Relations in a Multicultural Society
EEC 222: Human Relations in a Multicultural Society
KSP 220: Human Relations in a Multicultural Society
ENG 211: Multicultural Literature
ENG 211: Women's Literature
ENG 212: World Literature
ETHN 100: American Racial Minorities
ETHN 101: Introduction to Ethnic Studies
GERO 200: Aging: Interdisciplinary Perspectives
HIST 190: US History to 1877
HIST 191: US History after 1877
HUM 251: Coming of Age: Gender and Culture
MUS 125: Pop Music USA: Jazz and Blues
REHB 110: Sensitivity to Disability
SOC 208: Courtship, Marriage, and Family
SPEE 203: Intercultural Communication
WOST 110: Introduction to Women's Studies

Assessment Methodology

The Category 7 Course Instructor's Assessment Group consisted of the following members:

Kathryn Elliott, Gerontology
Linda Good, Elementary and Early Childhood Education
Gwen Griffin, English (Chair)
Joann Quiñones, Ethnic Studies

After reviewing the available reports of other groups, our group met on two separate occasions for assessment training, once with Bill Anderson and once with Warren Sandman, and then worked to develop a rubric. Our charge was to determine “whether students are learning and achieving a majority of the outcomes at some level (minimal or mastery).” We also struggled with several key issues we believe influence the data we collected:

1. outcomes that seemed to measure students’ attitudes or future awareness of bigotry, exclusion, discrimination, and racism;
2. outcomes that are oriented toward social sciences being used to assess other disciplines such as music, literature, and education;
3. Category 7 courses that don’t address a majority of the identified outcomes.

This assessment process was especially difficult due to the significant variation in courses and assignments that we were reviewing, and the subjective and long-term outcomes that were expected. While there are “many viable assessment methods,” this category produced too many different kinds of deliverables to develop a coherent, consistent system of evaluation. Once we agreed (reluctantly) upon the rubric, the group then independently evaluated five samples of student materials from History, Ethnic Studies, Communication Disorders, Speech, and Education in an effort to develop some consistency in ratings. The materials were chosen in an effort to represent as effectively as possible the wide range of assignments that were submitted, and included an exam with matching, multiple choice, true/false, and essay questions; a reaction paper; an interview exercise that included medical history; a 30-question ethnocentrism interview; and a reflective analysis paper.

During this inter-rater reliability phase, our evaluations of the samples revealed that the courses help students meet only the basic levels of understanding regarding human diversity in the United States as currently defined by Category 7 of the General Education requirements at MSU. Based upon this rubric and interpreting our assessment liberally, only one class we evaluated addressed all five of the outcomes for the category, and only at a minimal level of mastery (level 1). Two of the five classes addressed only one outcome; two classes addressed only three outcomes. Each of us regarded the limitations of the rubric as some of the courses were not asking the students to demonstrate these outcomes. However, in some cases, courses were being evaluated on outcomes that were not part of their original design or intent; consequently, the results of the assessment based upon this rubric are, in our opinion, not reliable.

Category 7 Assessment Rubric and Sampling

The outcomes and resulting rubric are presented here with results of the inter-rater reliability assessment indicated in the last column. Total number of items evaluated was five, with the number meeting the outcome listed first (e.g., 4 did meet the objective/ 1 did not). The same rubric was used for the overall assessment of the courses. Each committee member was given an equal number of of courses to assess with a random selection of ten samples of each assignment/paper submitted when possible (some courses generated fewer than ten samples, in which case the evaluator received all assignments/papers submitted). Committee members did not evaluate courses from their own departments.

O/O #1: Understand the development of and the changing meaning of group identities in the United States' history and culture

Rubric Score	Student Outcome: (developmental—if students meet level 3, they demonstrate levels 1 and 2 as well)	Student work meets Outcome (yes/no)
1	Student will be able to identify a group which claims unique identity in the United States	4/1 80%
2	Student will be able to describe the development of a group which claims a unique identity in the United States	1/4 20%
3	Student will be able to describe the development of a group which claims a unique identity in the US, and will be able to trace the changes in the meaning of group identity	0/5 0%

O/O #2: Demonstrate an awareness of the individual and institution dynamics of unequal power relations between groups in contemporary society

Rubric Score	Student Outcome: (developmental—if students meet level 4, they demonstrate levels 1, 2, and 3 as well)	Student work meets Outcome (yes/no)
1	Student will be able to identify an unequal power relationship in contemporary society	2/3 40%
2	Student will be able to offer a definition of individual and institutional dynamics of unequal power relationships in contemporary society	0/5 0%
3	Student will be able to discuss one example of unequal power relations between groups in contemporary society, focusing on the individual and institutional dynamics involved	0/5 0%
4	Student will be able to compare and contrast at least two examples of unequal power relations between groups in contemporary society, focusing on the individual and institutional dynamics involved	0/5 0%

O/O #3: Analyze and evaluate their own attitudes, behaviors, concepts, and beliefs regarding diversity, racism, and bigotry

Rubric Score	Student Outcome: (developmental—if students meet level 2, they demonstrate level 1 as well)	Student work meets Outcome (yes/no)
1	Student will be able to describe his or her own attitudes, behaviors, concepts, and beliefs regarding diversity, racism, and bigotry	2/3 40%
2	Student will be able to analyze and evaluate possible contributing elements which shaped his or her own attitudes, behaviors, concepts, and beliefs regarding diversity, racism, and bigotry	0/5 0%

O/O #4: Describe and discuss the experience and contributions of the many groups that shape American society and culture, in particular those groups that have suffered discrimination and exclusion

Rubric Score	Student Outcome: (developmental—if students meet level 4, they demonstrate levels 1, 2, and 3 as well)	Student work meets Outcome (yes/no)
1	Student will be able to describe the experience and contributions to American society of at least one group	1/4 20%
2	Student will be able to describe the experience and contributions to American society of at least one group which has been or currently is suffering from discrimination and exclusion	1/4 20%
3	Student will be able to describe the experience and contributions to American society of at least two groups which have been or currently are suffering from discrimination and exclusion	0/5 0%
4	Student will be able to describe the experience and contributions to American society of at least two groups which have been or currently are suffering from discrimination and exclusion, and then compare those experiences and contributions to a group which has not suffered discrimination and exclusion	0/5 0%

O/O #5: Demonstrate communication skills necessary for living and working effectively in a society with great population diversity

Rubric Score	Student Outcome: (developmental—if students meet level 2, they demonstrate level 1 as well)	Student work meets Outcome (yes/no)
1	Student will be able to describe effective communication between different groups	2/3 40%
2	Student will be able to demonstrate effective communication between different groups	0/5 0%

Assessment Results

While we are well aware that our goal was to establish some baseline information for assessing Category 7, we have grave concerns about the objectives and outcomes for this category. Not one class that we evaluated addresses all of the objectives, even the four courses specifically designed to address Human Diversity (English 211: Multicultural Literature; Ethnic Studies 100: American Racial Minorities; Ethnic Studies 101: Introduction to Ethnic Studies; and Speech 203: Intercultural Communication). These four courses rated highest with the rubric, but again, human diversity is their whole focus.

For the remaining 14 courses assessed in this process, we will make some general observations rather than specific comments about individual courses. It is our consensus that faculty who participated in this exercise work hard to deliver good classes that achieve their personal goals as well as their departmental goals for general education. That their courses may or may not meet the objectives and outcomes of Category 7 is a reflection of the inadequacies of the system of course selection and a lack of communication about the requirements of this category rather than a shortcoming of their course design or teaching abilities.

That said, all of these courses are well designed, and when they address one area of Category 7, they usually do it well, but only at level 1. For example, most students in all 18 courses were able to “identify a group which claims a unique identity in the US,” but very few were able to “describe the development of a group” or able to “trace changes in the meaning of group identity.” Most students were able to identify “dynamics of unequal power relations between two groups in contemporary society,” but very few were able to (or asked to) “compare and contrast at least examples of unequal power.” For some of the courses, one problem is whether or not the students are even asked by a professor to “relate past discrimination/social inequalities to contemporary society.” Could the student’s inability to achieve mastery of these outcomes be due to the questions that are not asked or assignments that are not given?

The courses that adopted a portfolio method were better able to demonstrate what the student learned over time. The range of assignments and examinations that we assessed created particular concern for us as a committee, especially when multiple-choice exams were the only samples submitted for a course. If a student performs well on a multiple-choice exam, we have no way of determining whether the student actually knows and understands the context or just memorized the basic facts outside of their meaningful context. For many courses in this assessment, based upon the materials we received, students do not necessarily have to include a higher level analysis of diversity as reflected in the rubric’s criteria.

To the degree that we can relate the materials to the assessment criteria, we conclude that an average student can satisfy the first level of Outcomes 1 and 2 (identifying groups with unique identities and identifying unequal power relationships), a minimal result. Based upon the wide range of courses and course expectations, being exposed to Outcomes 3-5 and mastering any of them becomes a “hit-and-miss” operation determined by which course a student may select to take. Outcome 3 (identifying personal attitudes toward racism, bigotry, and diversity) is so subjective and problematic that we question its inclusion in this category even though we fully understand the necessity of it. Rarely did any of the courses we evaluated address this outcome. Consequently, only four of the courses we assessed submitted assignments or syllabi that

indicated this outcome was even part of the class objectives. To truly be effective, more emphasis needs to be placed on Outcomes 3 and 4 (describing experiences and contributions of diverse groups), but this may be too much to ask for a single class. Based upon our review, students can complete the requirement for Category 7 with a single course that **does not** increase their understanding of

1. individual and group differences, emphasizing the dynamics of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, and/or disabilities in the history and culture of diverse groups in the United States;
2. the contributions of pluralism to United States society and culture; and
3. the historical and contemporary responses of the United States to group differences.

There is significant need for improvement.

Recommendations

Our charge at the beginning was “don’t assess what you don’t want to change.” While we tried to change the outcomes to truly reflect what could be reasonably expected of Category 7, that was not an option. Resigned to working with the existing outcomes, we were also reminded that the outcomes are to reflect what the *students are doing*, not what we are doing to them or not what attitudes they might hold some time in the future.

Some suggestions we would like to present include asking/requiring instructors who courses are included in Category 7

1. to assign a few mandatory reaction papers or essay questions that directly elicit **contextual** knowledge related to the outcomes;
2. to include the category goals in their course design and syllabus;
3. to develop assignments that reflect the outcomes; and
4. to consider how students could master these outcomes across a **series** of assignments and tests rather than expecting specific assignments or exams to show success in all outcomes.

The inherent difficulty with these suggestions is obvious—how do we **require** faculty to include anything in their courses?

We also want to take into account expectations that students have when they arrive on our campus. According to the National Survey of Student Engagement conducted at MSU in Spring 2003, there is a lack of diverse perspectives in class, especially for first-year students. Perhaps the range of courses in this category is so broad that it is difficult for students to recognize the true intent of its goals.

In addition, there are some specific operational kinds of suggestions that we would like to make for the next round of assessments for this category regarding how the materials are collected and evaluated. Certainly it would have been helpful for instructors to collate the assignments for each student to determine a particular student’s mastery of the outcomes. Also, perhaps only those assignments that are relevant to Category 7 can be submitted rather than all materials for the semester. The rubric itself is based directly on the outcomes of the category which limits any potential for flexibility in the rubric’s design.

Considering the potential impact that Category 7 (in an ideal form) could have on students in helping them learn about Human Diversity, we strongly recommend that the outcomes in this category be re-evaluated, and that the courses included to meet this category be very carefully considered. As it stands, the goals of Category 7 are not being attained.

Respectfully submitted,

Gwen Griffin, Chair
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