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# Assessment of URI's General Education Program

**Report to the Faculty Senate**

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Senator Sandy Jean Hicks**

**UCGE-Subcommittee on Assessment of  
General Education (SAGE)**

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# History

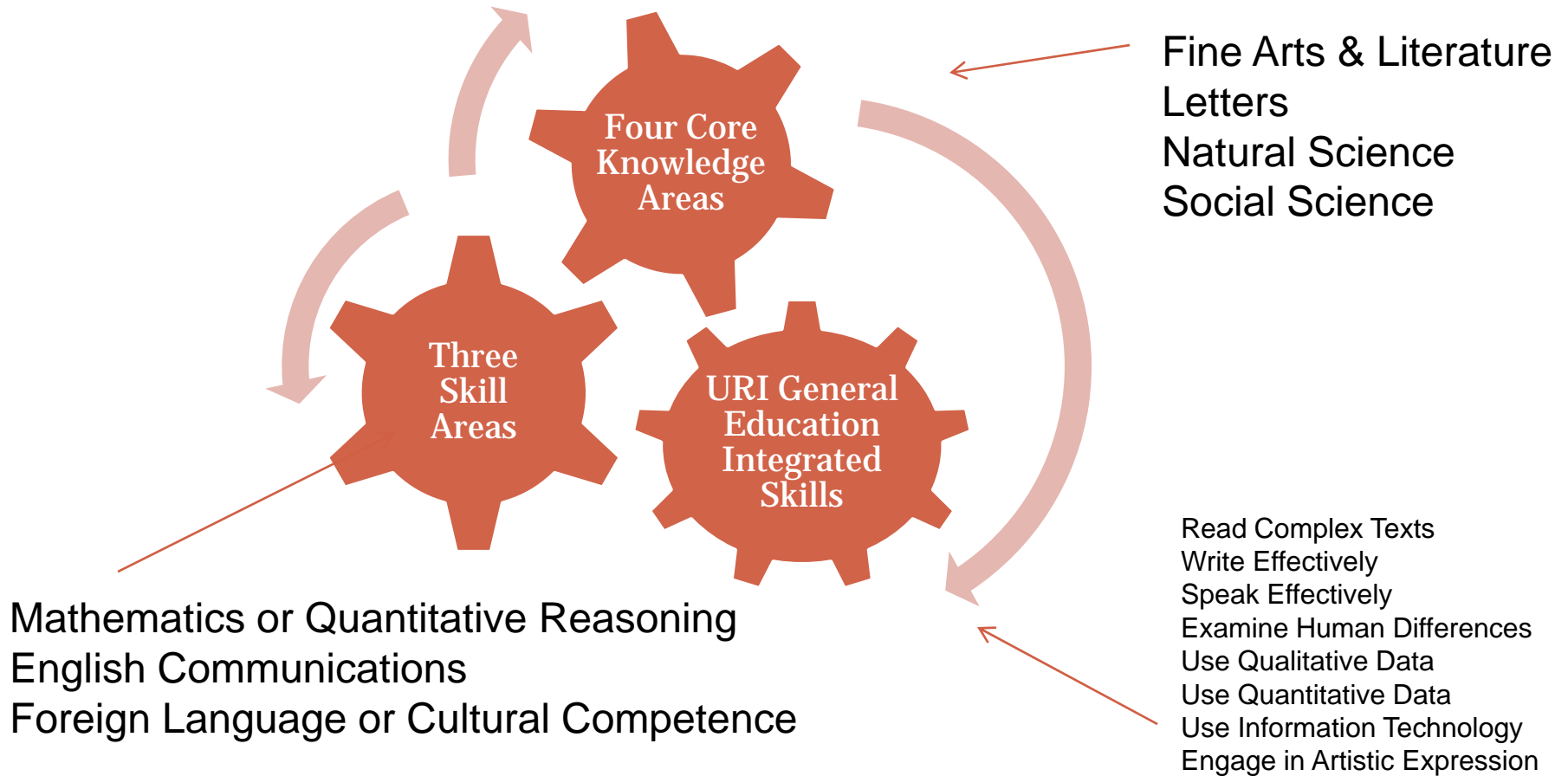
- Current program has been under revision since 1991.
  - Integrated Skills approved 2000
  - Integrated Skills implemented 2004
- Lack of Learning Outcomes cited in 1997 NEASC report
  - URI General Education Learning Outcomes approved 2005
- Work on General Education Outcomes Assessment begins in 2005
- Lack of plans to assess General Education cited in 2007 NEASC report
  - SAGE begins to collect and analyze sample tasks, student work and supplemental SET data

# URI Learning Outcomes

As a consequence of the interaction between General Education and major programs, the University of Rhode Island expects that all programs will lead students toward:

- the ability to think critically in order to solve problems and question the nature and sources of authority
- the ability to use the methods and materials characteristic of each knowledge area with an understanding of the interrelationship among and the interconnectedness of the core areas
- a commitment to intellectual curiosity and lifelong learning
- an openness to new ideas with the social skills necessary for both teamwork and leadership
- the ability to think independently and be self-directed; to make informed choices and take initiative

# URI General Education Program



# General Education Learning Outcome Objectives

As of fall 2005-In academic and non-academic settings, with respect to fine arts and literature, humanities and Letters, the natural sciences, and the social sciences, students will be able to:

- identify** basic concepts, theories, and developments;
- recognize** issues, as well as aesthetic and literary elements and forms;
- ask** questions appropriate to the modes of inquiry;
- collect** information relevant to the questions raised; and
- analyze** the information in order to address the questions or solve problems.

# SAGE

- In Fall 2007, after a long planning and implementation process, SAGE collected a randomized representative sample of course tasks and associated student work and SET data.
  - Analyzed sample tasks and student work
  - Analyzed SET data
  - Refined the classification scheme and the draft rubric for learning outcomes.

# Classification of Assignments into Learning Outcome Objectives

Core Knowledge Areas						
	Fine Arts	Literature	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences	Letters	Total
Total number of assignments in classification sample	2	3	8	10	11	34
<b>Learning Outcome Objectives</b>						
Identify	1	2	8	10	10	31(91%)
[Identify ONLY]	0	0	0	4	2	6(18%)
Recognize	2	3	8	5	7	25(73%)
Ask	1	1	0	1	1	4(12%)
Collect	1	2	3	2	0	8(23%)
Analyze-1: Apply	1	2	6	5	6	20(59%)
Analyze-2: Analyze	1	1	1	5	7	15(44%)
Analyze-3: Critically Evaluate	1	0	2	4	3	10(29%)
<b>Integrated Skills</b>						
Reading complex texts	0	2	2	2	8	14(41%)
Writing effectively	1	2	2	3	5	13(38%)
Speaking effectively	0	0	0	1	1	2(06%)
Examining human differences	0	0	0	6	2	8(23%)
Using quantitative data	0	0	6	1	0	7(20%)
Using qualitative data	0	0	0	1	0	1(03%)
Using information technology	0	0	1	2	0	3(09%)
Engaging artistic activity	2	2	0	1	0	5(15%)

# Draft Rubric (pt 1)

**Task Description: Students demonstrate effective [thinking/cognitive processing] in the ....**

Outcome Objective	N. A.*	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Not Enabled to Meet Expectations
Identify [facts, definitions, terms, concepts, people]		Correctly identifies or provides (recognizes or recalls) 80% or more of the requested factual information	Correctly identifies or provides 70-79% of the requested factual information	Correctly identifies or provides 69% or less of the requested factual information
Recognize [concepts or tools relevant for application to a problem situation]		Selects most or all (90-100%) of the relevant discipline-linked concepts for solving a problem; shows thorough awareness of what principles, methods, and concepts are relevant to a problem situation	Selects many (50-89%) of the relevant discipline-linked concepts for solving a problem; grasps the main points for making the connections to the problem, but misses some	Selects few (0-49%) of the relevant discipline-linked concepts for solving a problem; misses a number of useful connections of concepts and/or misses the main “key” that could unlock the problem
Ask [questions/hypotheses framed in terms of the discipline, relevant to the problem situation]		Converts an ill-defined problem situation into a question (or questions) that can be addressed within the discipline; does this with a high degree of efficiency, accuracy, and thoroughness	Converts an ill-defined problem situation into a question (or questions) that can be addressed within the discipline; does this with mixed or moderate degrees of efficiency, accuracy, and thoroughness	Misses the major discipline-linked question(s) that could be derived from an ill-defined problem situation; focuses on irrelevant aspects; misses major aspects of the problem; and/or poses the wrong question

# Draft Rubric (pt 2)

Outcome Objective	N.A. *	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Not Enabled to Meet Expectations
Collect [information relevant to answer the question or solve the problem – e.g. data; literature sources]		Uses appropriate sources (literature or sample); cites/describes sources correctly; is careful, thorough, specific, accurate, and precise in recording and presenting information	Uses some appropriate sources; cites sources; is careful enough in recording and presenting information to have a reasonably accurate overall perspective on the problem	Misses the most important sources; uses inappropriate sources; does not cite, or incorrectly cites sources; is sloppy, imprecise, incomplete in ways that may lead to a significantly distorted perspective on the problem
Analyze [describe argument; identify claims; evaluate support for claims; apply concepts to solve a problem]		Applies relevant concepts thoroughly and correctly to solve a problem; correctly identifies the logic and/or evidence used to convey an argument; critically evaluates conclusions by examining strengths and weaknesses of the argument	Applies some but not all of the relevant concepts to solve a problem; achieves only part of the correct answer after applying the concepts; generally follows the reasoning of the argument but misses some elements of the argument; correctly identifies some important aspects of the evidence and logic but not all; demonstrates some ability to explain critical judgments	Concepts are mis-applied; incorrect use of concepts leads to incorrect answer; argument is accepted uncritically or rejected on the basis of personal preference rather than the soundness of the argument; does not take a position or defend it when called for

# SET DATA Student Responses Questions 5-11

Percent of Student Responses, by Core Knowledge, from Sampled Sections, Fall 2007, for Strongly Agree and Agree				
Survey Questions 5-11	Fine Arts/ Literature	Letters	Social Science	Natural Science
	n=630	n=794	n=650	n=604
As a result of taking this course, I gained improved knowledge of the facts, concepts, vocabulary, and/or methods used in this area of study.	91.3	91.1	95.5	90.2
As a result of taking this course, I improved my ability to ask meaningful questions by making use of concepts and methods from this area of study.	78.1	77.1	86.9	77
As a result of taking this course, I improved my ability to find useful information and/or do research in this area of study.	74.1	72.5	82.8	74.1
As a result of taking this course, I improved my ability to apply concepts to solve problems or analyze situations in this area of study.	67.8	77.5	90.8	83.5
My interest in this area of study has increased as a result of taking this course.	74.5	66.2	75.8	64.2
I gained knowledge in this course that will help me better understand events, developments, and/or discoveries in the world around me.	78.6	71.5	93.3	84.1
I understand the purposes of the general education program at URI.	85.7	83.5	90.8	86.6

# SET DATA Student Responses Question 12

Percent of Student Responses, by Core Knowledge, From Sampled Kingston Sections, Fall 2007, for Response of Quite a Bit / Some

<b>The required readings, assignments, papers, projects, exams, etc. in this course gave me the opportunity to practice and/or use the following skills:</b>	<b>Fine Arts/ Literature  n=630</b>	<b>Letters  n=794</b>	<b>Social Science  n=650</b>	<b>Natural Science  n=604</b>
Writing effectively	73.8	88.4	86	43.9
Speaking effectively	64.3	42.9	36.8	12.7
Reading complex texts (primary sources, critical commentaries, journal articles, works of art, etc.)	70.3	83.6	86.6	63.5
Using quantitative data to analyze situations (using numerical tables, graphs, etc.)	32.2	37.4	60.3	85.6
Using qualitative data to analyze situations (using narratives, case studies, essays, etc.)	59.7	73.7	85.3	56.2
Examining human difference (race, gender, language, etc.) in various settings.	72.4	80.8	87.6	37.6
Using information technology (web-based assignments, PowerPoint presentations, etc.)	45.7	58.2	59.3	47.1
Engaging in artistic expression (using the creative process in the fine arts, etc.)	79.2	48.7	56.8	21.5

# Potential Use of Data

- Sampled tasks indicated that students are experiencing a range of cognitive challenges across the core knowledge areas.
  - Exception: Ask
    - Recommendation: Design more opportunities for students to ask questions, and collect and analyze data to answer those questions.

# Current Considerations

## URI Academic Plan

- Reinvigorate the general education program to assure relevance in preparing students for the future.
- Enhance and increase interdisciplinary courses and programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels.
- Boost experiential learning for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Encourage lifelong learning.

## NEASC

- Design a plan to monitor, over time, the effectiveness of the courses in the general education curriculum and to re-certify the courses that are part of the curriculum.
- Build consequences into the system to deal with lack of adherence to general education or to its assessment.

# Recommendations

- Proceed with assessment of Core Knowledge (model assignments; pilot rubric)
- Extend assessment to integrated skills and core skills (define appropriate objectives)
- Refine general education program based on assessment findings