

Minutes of the General Education Committee

February 22, 2016

Hawaii Hall 309

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m.

Present: Hokulani Aikau, Miguel Felipe, Alyssa Kapaona, Dore Minatodani, Mike Nassir, Kapa Oliveira, Maria Stewart, Ryan Yamaguchi

GEO Staff: Lisa Fujikawa, Vicky Keough

Excused: Ron Cambra, Kaitlyn Conner, Bonnyjean Manini, Kiana Shiroma, Nori Tarui

1. Action Items

- The **January 25, 2016 GEC meeting minutes** were approved as written.
- **Aurelio Agcaoili's E, O, and W renewal request for HON 301/POLS 386** was approved by a vote of 5-0-0.
- The **course-based O Focus request for SPAN 403** was approved by a vote of 5-0-0. One member expressed surprise that the course was not also being proposed for a W Focus.

2. Announcements

- **Update: Focus credit for repeating a non-repeatable course.** When the issue was brought up at the February Council of Academic Advisors (CAA) meeting, the general consensus was that the Focus credit *would* be awarded if students were to repeat a non-repeatable course. Kiana confirmed that STAR still lists the Focus designation for the repeated course, even if the student is not awarded any academic credit. (This is not the case for failed courses, where STAR drops the GenEd designation.)

Advisors also said that students are strongly discouraged from repeating a course simply for Focus credit, although there are some students who need to repeat (non-repeatable) courses to earn a higher grade for School/College admissions or to fulfill major requirements. The problem also occurs more commonly with transfer and "self-advised" students. Lisa will follow up with the individual advising units to put together a more comprehensive list of how each advising unit handles the problem.

- **Board discussion items.** Liaisons were asked to present any questions/concerns their Boards have.
 - **Online courses.** The E and O Boards are concerned about how online courses can effectively meet their Focus Hallmarks. The E Board has invited instructors to come and talk with the Board about the issue, and the O Board is working on a best practices document. The GEC questioned whether there should be separate/different forms for online, face-to-face, and hybrid courses. There is currently no mechanism in place to re-review an approved course if it changes teaching mode (e.g., from face-to-face to online). Another consideration is synchronous vs. asynchronous courses, with the latter format presenting problems for live oral delivery.
 - **FS to FQ transition.** The Foundations Board will be discussing the transition from FS to FQ at their meeting on Thursday. There is also a System Foundations meeting where Maria will

represent the GEC and present the approved FQ Hallmarks and tentative implementation plans.

- Interpretation and application of Hallmarks. Several GEC liaisons have noticed that there are inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of hallmarks by the boards from year to year. They questioned whether there is a mechanism to review and revise Hallmarks, or a way to bring more clarity to those that are repeatedly questioned, perhaps via the Explanatory Notes. After some discussion, it was decided that the liaisons would bring the issue back to their Boards and facilitate a discussion of the Hallmarks and Explanatory Notes. One member described the Explanatory Notes as “the Board’s way of communicating [its interpretation and application of the Hallmarks] to future Board members and proposers” and suggested that the Boards consider modifying or adding to existing Explanatory Notes to provide further clarification.

3. Discussion Items

- **Administrative guidelines/procedures for Focus Exemption rejections.**

Background: The General Education Office (GEO) would like some direction from the GEC regarding what information should be provided in the rejection memo, and whether it is possible for students to resubmit.

Discussion:

- Incomplete applications should be sent back to the student rather than posted for the GEC to review. This is the only type of “resubmission” that is allowed: an application that was previously incomplete.
- In the case of Focus Exemption requests, different decisions may be given for requests based on the same course, because the GEC is making a determination about whether each student is meeting the Hallmarks based on his/her experience in taking the course.
- “All [GEC] decisions are final.” Students cannot appeal the decision nor submit another request using the same experience.
- The rejection memo should not have detailed information. It should follow the scholarship model, where students are simply informed whether or not they were awarded the scholarship.
- For each rejection, “brief but clear” reasons should be recorded in the GEC meeting minutes. These can be referred to if the student asks for additional information. Some felt that the GEO could provide this explanation to the student, while others felt that the “people who voted” (i.e., the GEC) should be responsible.
- It was suggested that an “explanatory note” be added to the Focus Exemption application to remind students that their cover letter needs to clearly address how their experience meets each of the Hallmarks of the requested Focus. Students should also be warned that “submission does not guarantee approval.”
- The “Application Process” instructions should clearly state that a syllabus is required for course-based requests. Perhaps a checklist can also be added to help students make sure that their application is complete.
- Applications that are submitted after the published deadline may be accepted, but the GEC should not be given the student’s expected graduation date, as it may cause undue pressure to approve the late request. There are also “no promises” if an application is submitted late.

Decision: The GEC voted 6-0-0 that

- Only complete applications should be forwarded to the GEC. Incomplete applications should be returned to the student with a request for the missing information/documents.

- The rejection memo will be a standard letter, with no details about why the application was not approved.
- The application will be modified to remind students that a) the application should address all the Hallmarks, b) submission does not guarantee approval, and c) all decisions are final. A checklist will also be added.
- **Performance courses: Should they be eligible for O Focus designations?**
Background: This question was raised when the GEC reviewed a request from a student who wanted to use his acting experience to request an O Focus Exemption.

Discussion:

- The O Focus was intended to help students learn how to talk *about* a particular field of study. In a performance course, students are not learning the language of the field, nor are they talking about it. If a student is *doing* a subject versus talking about it, should the course have an O Focus? Several members felt that simply performing in a play should not constitute an O Focus, but talking about the performance should.
- Students in typical performance classes give a recital but then are given feedback on different aspects of their performance by the instructor. This should qualify for an O Focus. This is in contrast to a choir course, where the focus is on performance rather than on the critique. At least one member felt strongly that such a course should not be given an O Focus.
- There is also a difference between oral activity and communication. Several members felt that the O Focus should be focused on the latter.
- It was noted that performances are currently listed as eligible oral communication activities.

No decision was made/position was taken by the GEC. The issue will be raised with the O Board.

4. Next meeting: March 28, 2016 from 3:00-4:30 p.m., Hawaii Hall 309.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Submitted by Lisa Fujikawa, Recorder