

Minutes of the General Education Committee
Wednesday, April 18, 2012
Hawai'i Hall 208

Attendees: Ron Cambra (AVCUE), Joe Jarrett, Dore Minatodani, Scott Rowland, Mamoru Sato, Comfort Sumida, Ryan Yamaguchi (Admissions), Wei Zhang

Support staff: Dawne Bost (GEO Recorder), Lisa Fujikawa (GEO), Jo-Anne Nakamoto (GEO), Todd Sammons (GEO)

Excused: Jim Caron, Richard Chadwick (SEC), Sianha Gualano (ASUH)

Absent: Fred Birkett

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Joe Jarrett at 12:03 p.m.

Action Items:

1. Minutes

Modifications under "Information Item #2" (additions in italics, deletions crossed out):

- Delete first bullet.
- Modify second bullet, first sentence to read "Discussion: Does the UHM Foundations Board require input *regarding changes to the Hallmarks?*"
- Modify second bullet, fourth open bullet to read "Another thought is that ~~it~~ *quantitative skills* might be tweaked..."
- Modify third bullet to read "Joe's review of *peer and benchmark* schools indicated that half of them ~~used to~~ have a combination..."

Minutes were accepted with these changes.

2. Focus Exemption Applications:

- The committee reviewed exemption applications of two students, currently studying in Japan, for a course in which they are currently enrolled and that is taught by non-UH faculty.
- A discussion of the provided course information included concerns that "the writing doesn't aid in comprehension of course materials" and that the only clear paper requirements addressed page number.
- It was noted that the student applications provided very different perspectives of the course, with one student only marginally completing the application questions.
- There was an inquiry about the timing of the requests since the students are currently enrolled. Fujikawa stated the students are seniors who will need to take a WI course next semester to graduate if the exemptions are not granted.
- Yamaguchi clarified that the Study Abroad course will provide the students with course credit but will not be officially designated as a W Focus course, even if the Focus Exemption application is approved. Consequently, at graduation, the transcripts will show that the students completed four W courses, rather than the required five.
- The committee members generally agreed that the course instructor reviewed the Writing Intensive requirements and the course was adequately adjusted to allow the exemption for both students.
- The requests were approved by a vote of 5 for, 1 against, 0 abstentions.

3. Course-based Focus Proposals:

SLS 313 (O) Techniques in Second language Teaching: Listening and Speaking was recommended for approval by the O Board.

- The committee was concerned that the assignments were “small” and “paired” and questioned the equal participation of each paired student. The grading methods employed in evaluating paired assignments were also discussed.
- Sammons referred to the O Hallmarks to clarify that paired assignments are allowed in O designated classes.
- He shared that individual, paired and group assignments are permissible.
- The course was approved by a vote of 5-0-1.

ACC 460 (O) International and Managerial Accounting was recommended for approval by the O Board.

- The GEC discussed concerns that the amount of oral presentation training appeared to be minimal and unspecified.
- There was also an apparent lack of clarity about feedback methods and the percentages assigned to assignments. It was noted that one O Board member also expressed reservation regarding the feedback provided by the instructor.
- The use of unit mastery to insure student comprehension of the course materials was also discussed.
- Jarrett expressed concern that oral communication training was not “woven into the fabric of the class” because online lectures appeared to be the primary source of oral communication training.
- Sammons referenced the O Hallmarks to confirm that training does not have to be included in the course in such a manner.
- The course was approved unanimously with the stipulation that a letter with GEC concerns be sent to the appropriate persons (i.e., no explicit feedback from instructor; make sure that information about the instructor provision of individualized feedback was included on the syllabus).

TI 401 (W) Principles of Translation was recommended for approval by the W Board.

- Jarrett immediately expressed concerns about the lack of specific information regarding feedback and the fact that 20% of the grade is in a “bracketed reference.”
- Jarrett also asked a question shared by a few other members of the GEC when he inquired if “translation constitutes writing.”
- Sammons, Fujikawa, Bost, Zhang, and Yamaguchi all stated that translation is in fact an endeavor that holds the same (and often more difficult) elements required of original composition.
- Sammons stated that many of the assignments are “metacognitive, not just translation.” He defined “metacognition” as the act of reflecting on one’s actions.
- Jarrett observed the syllabus did not adequately show if the course meets the W Focus requirements.
- Sammons directed the committee to the chart accompanying the course proposal and stated the chart is usually what the W Board relies on since a syllabus is not required for new course proposals.
- Jarrett stated he thought the chart provided with the proposal was also “vague.”
- Jarrett inquired about the content of the W Board’s discussion of the proposal. Sammons noted the discussion did not reflect Jarrett’s concerns as far as he recalled. Fujikawa reiterated the Board’s recommendation based on the recommendation of the faculty member who reviewed the proposal.
- There was a subsequent discussion of the efficacy of the W Board procedure requiring only one faculty member to review course-based proposals. Sammons stated the W Board recently examined the possibility of requiring two readers for W course-based proposals and asked GEC members to share their thoughts on this issue.

- Rowland, Jarrett, Sato and Minatodani stated they saw the positive and possibly preferable benefits of two faculty readers examining the W course-based proposals. There were no other comments.
- TI 401 was approved by a vote of 4-2-0.
- The approval memo will include a note stating the course syllabus must be modified to reflect the length and types of assignments required for the course. The syllabus should also provide more specific information addressing the way in which “grades and assignments are broken down.”

JOUR 301 (W) was recommended for approval by the W Board.

- Jarrett introduced the course as a “slam dunk” that is “all about writing” and “no doubt qualifies” for approval.
- The GEC voted unanimously to approve the course for a W course-based designation, 6-0-0.

CHN 441 (W) was recommended for approval by the W Board.

- Jarrett opened the discussion by questioning several aspects of the course. He asked if the writing was conducted in Chinese characters and noted it was difficult to determine the actual length of the required writing assignments. He also wondered about instructor feedback and the drawbacks of teaching the course online.
- Jarrett also noted the course syllabus does not provide adequate information to address these concerns.
- Sammons again pointed out that the W Board usually uses the chart that accompanies all initial W proposals rather than the syllabi to make their decisions and referred Jarrett and the other GEC members to the CHN 441 chart.
- Fujikawa stated that the syllabus provided to the GEC was a revised syllabus submitted by the instructor after being contacted for clarification by the W Board. Fujikawa also reiterated the W Board often uses the accompanying chart to determine the course’s adherence to the W Hallmarks.
- The GEC voted unanimously to approve the course for a W course-based designation, 6-0-0.
- Jarrett stated despite the approval, the course needs to be “more explicit and be more specific about instructor feedback and how writing is incorporated in to the grade.”

HON 291 alpha (W) Sophomore Seminar was recommended for approval by the W Board.

- The Honors program proposed that HON 291 obtain W designation for courses whose alphas designate different Diversification areas.
- Per Fujikawa, this is the only case where alpha designations have indicated Diversification designations and where instructors will be able to design new courses to meet the Diversification designation. She stated that this would be a departure from the way most courses with a W designation have been taught in that instructors usually follow a master syllabus or adhere closely to the way the course has been taught in the past.
- Some felt that as Honors Program courses, the content of the course and adherence to the Hallmarks would be taken seriously. Others felt that the “weak” sample syllabi that were provided indicated otherwise.
- The discussion that followed centered on instructor feedback and the responsibilities and capabilities of the Course Coordinator.
- Rowland stated he did not see evidence that the students would be given feedback during the writing process. He expressed concerns that both syllabi failed to indicate that drafts of the major papers would be required and stated that in his experience, the use of drafts and feedback strengthen student writing skills.
- Sammons stated the W Board discussion centered about the feasibility of approving the course for a designation when alphas that may not have been taught with a W the required two times would fall under the blanket approval. He said concerns about instructor feedback were not discussed.

- Jarrett called for a motion to approve the course. The motion was denied by a vote of 0-4-2.
- After the vote, discussion continued about the merits of and problems with the course.
- Jarrett expressed reservations about approving a course that allows “any instructor to come in” when “you cannot be sure they will teach it as a WI.”
- Sammons stated there is precedent with course-based English courses allowing a great degree of latitude for instructors in course development. He stated a course coordinator evaluating the courses for adherence to W Focus requirements is in place in English and will be in place for HON 291.
- Minatodani expressed concern about the feasibility of putting “trust” into the Course Coordinator’s ability to assure courses meet the Hallmarks, particularly in light of the weak syllabi submitted with the proposal.
- Nakamoto shared that the Course Coordinator is a faculty member, not clerical.
- Sammons stated the W Board requested that the Honors Program provide a faculty Course Coordinator qualified to manage the course’s different Diversification designations. He stated the Honors Program response was a satisfactory choice for the W Board.
- Rowland reintroduced his concerns about the apparent lack of drafts and feedback during the process of producing major papers.
- Bost stated that at the Honors level, drafts may not be considered necessary by the instructor, who may follow a common practice of providing comments on the final submission for each paper that are expected to be applied to the papers that follow.
- Rowland asked if the syllabi or chart indicate that there will be feedback on the papers submitted for evaluation. Bost could not locate a reference on the syllabi or chart, but stated it was “almost inconceivable” that an Honors instructor would simply provide grades to papers without corresponding feedback.
- Cambra and Sammons concurred that it was feasible to conclude that both Honors faculty and Honors students would expect feedback on written submissions to be a part of the evaluation process.
- Jarrett again expressed reservations that future instructors and any course coordinator would “stick to the party line” and adhere to W Hallmarks.
- Sammons questioned the seeming skepticism about the Honors Program’s veracity and intentions considering prior approvals of similar course-based proposals.
- Cambra asked why the GEC had, in the past, issued approvals to questionable courses with corresponding instructional letters, but determined this course-based proposal should be denied without such a consideration.
- Cambra pointed out the GEC had already approved at least two courses, during this meeting, after discussion of similar issues, yet now seemingly were applying a different standard to the Honors Program’s proposal.
- Sammons also remarked that the W Board was informed that the Honors Course Coordinator promised to closely follow the W course guidelines provided to her.
- Jarrett suggested that the Course Coordinator draft guidelines that would be adhered to by all instructors.
- Sammons agreed he would request the guidelines if necessary but questioned the motivation for requesting such a document. Jarrett reiterated previous skepticism about the role of the Course Coordinator and stated the commitment to follow the guidelines should be part of the course file.
- Minatodani stated that as a result of this expanded discussion, she could now see issuing an approval for the course with “specific guidelines for future course instructors telling them how to meet the WI requirements.”
- Sammons pointed out that votes resulting in the rejection of a course could be reopened with a new motion.

- Minatodani submitted a new motion to reopen the vote for approval of the course. The motion was seconded and the revised vote resulted in a 5 to 1 vote for approval.

Critical Thinking Working Group Report:

- Sammons reported that after a stalled start the group looked at how to define and assess critical thinking, and applied the definition to Manoa's ILO's and Departmental SLO's.
- He said the group determined critical thinking was present in nearly all academic areas of Manoa. The Working Group recommended that the only step needed was to continue to raise consciousness.
- The GEC voted unanimously to accept the report.

Information Items:

1. Report on Foundations Multi-campus Group Meeting:

- Sammons, Fujikawa and Bost attended the Foundations Multi-campus Group Meeting. They reported that the group accepted the FS Working Group's proposed changes to Hallmark Five and the corresponding explanatory note. Both changes serve to clarify the Hallmark rather than alter the Hallmark's intent. Fujikawa will provide the exact language to GEC members for their review.
- The Multi-campus Group also felt that they were not well-positioned to deal with the quantitative skills issue. They determined that the UH system needs to address the issue and perhaps revisit the FS Hallmarks.

2. Update: Memo concerning SOCS 150:

- The memo notifying Social Sciences about the SOCS 150 decision was circulated to GEC members for input.
- SOCS 150 was given a deadline of October 15, 2013 to submit renewal materials.
- Foundations Board meets Friday, April 20, and will review/discuss the memo at that time.
- Members should email Jarrett with any feedback on the memo. The goal is to have it sent out next week.

Meeting adjourned at 1:33 p.m.

Next meeting: May 2, 2012, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Submitted by Dawne Bost, Recorder.