Instructions: Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. This report will be electronically submitted to <curriculum@sjsu.edu>, by the department chair, to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by October 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1

To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1) What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

SLO 1: Students should be able to use the methods of science and knowledge derived from current scientific inquiry in life or physical science to question existing explanations

(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

It is of great importance to note that this was the first AY to have every instructor submit their forms in order to create this report. I would like to attribute part of this show of cooperation to the release of a streamlined updated version of the instructor report that was created and delivered by Ms. Poffenroth during this academic year. This new form increased the clarity of information needed for instructors and made it much easier for them to comply. The addition of so many diverse experiences has vastly improved the sense of assessment being carried out in AY2015-2016. Across 11 sections, 5 instructors served a total of 874 students.

Mastery of GELO#1 was extremely diverse, as to be expected from this many instructors, sections and students. However, most instructors reported that at least 73% of students had achieved at least a C in the assessment assignments – which is in line with most general education courses in the sciences.

Some of the re-occurring themes presented in the instructor reports were students struggling with discerning reputable material from the vast amount of written information on the web and a lack of critical thinking skills.

With GELO 1, most instructors used a host of assessment tools, including a large literature review paper. Given that most sections were 60 – 125 students, this proved difficult for instructors to
provide the level of writing support many GE students require, even with the suggestion that students make good use of the SJSU Writing Center.

(3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year? (If no modifications are planned, the course coordinator should indicate this.)

Instructors planned a host of modifications for future versions of their courses including: increased group work and interpersonal interaction in the classroom, as well as incorporating more timely/current examples of biology as it is happening in the news.

An interesting aspect I witnessed in the reports was the more Canvas was used the less students attended in person courses. Instructors plan to incorporate ways to encourage students to attend lectures, while giving them the support that the online LMS provides.

Lastly, there was a discussion of class size and individual student motivation. These two are recurring themes across most, if not all, general education courses that each instructor must grapple with each semester.

Part 2

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

(4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes.

(5) If this course is in a GE Area with a stated enrollment limit (Areas A1, A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z), please indicate how oral presentations will be evaluated with larger sections (Area A1), or how practice and revisions in writing will be addressed with larger sections, particularly how students are receiving thorough feedback on the writing which accounts for the minimum word count in this GE category (Areas A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z) and, for the writing intensive courses (A2, A3, and Z), documentation that the students are meeting the GE SLOs for writing.

This course is an area B2 course and class sizes typically now run at a max of 95 (no longer 100+ students). That said, the writing requirement is demanding for instructors to grade as indicated above. As Chair, I’m now assigning TAs (graduate students who have met the GWAR) requirement to help with grading and feedback. I’m asking that instructors utilize rubrics for writing assignments to allow for more consistency across both grading and sections for this course. TA support started this semester, and we will be working on standardized grading rubrics to be used across all section this AY.