General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Biology 54, Human Understanding  
GE Area : E

Results reported for AY : 2017-2018  
# of sections: 10  
# of instructors: 4

Course Coordinator: Mary Poffenroth  
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Department Chair: Dr. Jeff Honda  
College: Science

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 will be able to recognize the physiological, social/cultural, and psychological influences on their well-being.

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

Out of the four instructors who taught Bio 54 in AY17-18, only two submitted reports: Goyal and Poffenroth. This makes the sample size a bit smaller than it should be and the outcomes of SLO1 assessment varied widely between the two instructional faculty members who submitted. Goyal found that 50% of her students failed to master SLO1, while Poffenroth found only 12% of students across her sections failed to master SLO1. This extreme difference may be due to how each instructor is assessing SLO1 and perhaps the format of the course: in person vs. online.

Both Goyal and Poffenroth used a variety of assessment opportunities including structured reading, assignments and embedded quiz questions. However, given that all Poffenroth’s section were online, many more assignments were discussion based – which is harder in a live course to assess. Poffenroth found that the safety of the online environment, paired with the opportunity of time to articulate one’s responses, allows students to dive deeper into SLO1. In the absence of face to face pressure to perform, students can elaborate on complex ideas and feel safe to express a myriad of opinions and understandings about difficult topics like aging, death, mental health, and addiction. These topics may feel too uncomfortable in the live classroom for students to have the courage they need to adequately explore this essential SLO1 content.
(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.)

In an effort to address the shortcomings of the previous academic year, Poffenroth has brought in a peer mentor writing fellow that she works closely with to tutor and hold workshops for the students of Bio 54 around writing and research. Poffenroth is also working with the SJSU Librarian Yen Tran to create a digital offering to ensure all students have the study skills they need and understand how to access all the library has to offer. Having these additional non-faculty contacts will be instrumental in having online students feel they have an entire team supporting their success. Goyal plans to improve her quizzing and bring in additional cutting edge content topics such as CRISPR and STEM Cell research to help keep students excited and engaged.

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.

N/A