

GEP COURSE ASSESSMENT

UMBC Functional Competencies

1. *Written and oral communication*
2. *Scientific and quantitative reasoning*
3. *Critical analysis and reasoning*
4. *Technology competency*
5. *Information literacy*

Chart for Reporting Assessment Results for UMBC General Education Courses**

POLI 210	Functional Competency #1	Functional Competency #3
Course-specific goals linked to FC	"Communicate knowledgeably and effectively, both orally and in writing, regarding key issues in political theory and in our own era."	"Draw connections between important and recurring theoretical debates and present political issues, and bring a theoretical understanding of the past to bear on contemporary political problems."
How do you assess or measure achievement of those goals?	Scoring distribution from an at-home final exam essay question (style and evidence categories)	Scoring distribution from an at-home final exam essay question (evidence category)
What did you find?	98% of students achieved the learning outcome with respect to writing style. 96% of students achieved the learning outcome with respect to use of evidence (a measure encompassing accurate citation).	96% of students achieved the learning outcome.
Changes proposed based on assessment results	None	None

** Suggested by Barbara Walvoord during a consultation at UMBC

Other comments: A narrative presentation of the direct measures follows.

UMBC GEP Assessment Report
Department of Political Science
June 30, 2020

This cycle's assessed GEP course is POLI 210, Political Theory, which counts toward the Arts and Humanities GEP requirement. Assessment data from the class were collected during the fall 2019 semester, specifically from one of the class's final exam essays. Students completed the exam at home on their computers within a specified 24-hour time period. Books and notes were permitted.

The particular essay selected for assessment pertained to political philosophers' ideas about economic justice. The question presented students with a report on a poll of Americans' attitudes about the fairness of the economy and tasked them with discussing how four core political theorists "would describe, explain, or diagnose this problem, issue, or debate." The theorists were John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and two of following three: John Locke, Karl Marx, and Adam Smith.

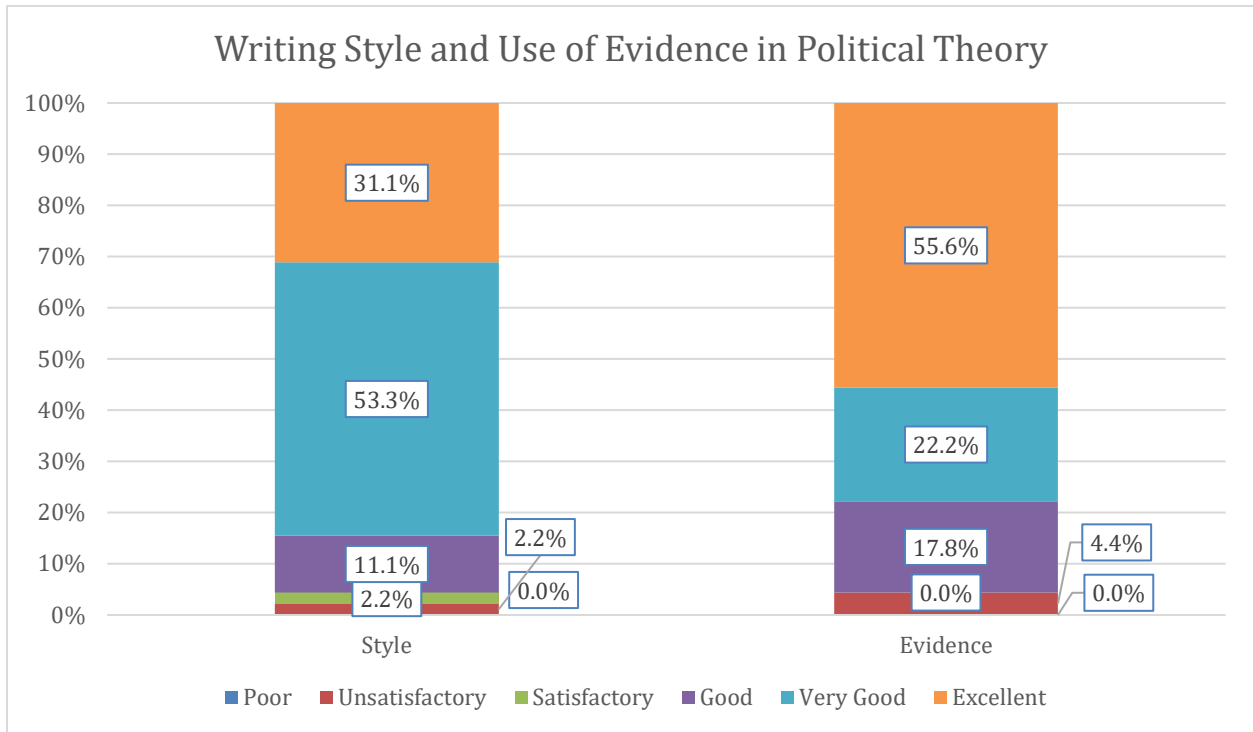
Two categories from the instructor's final exam scoring rubric align well with UMBC GEP Functional Competencies: "style" (FC1) and "evidence" (FC1 and FC3). The instructor defined these elements of the assessment as follows:

Style: The response is written in complete sentences that are relatively free from grammatical or punctuation errors; there is a basic organizational scheme; main points arranged in logical order and supported by examples; and a brief conclusion is provided.

Evidence: Includes the most relevant points from the assigned readings to support the main arguments being made; direct quotations and paraphrases from the readings are accurately cited (page or paragraph number).

Essays could attain one of six levels of achievement on each of these measures: "excellent," "very good," "good," "satisfactory," "unsatisfactory," or "poor," the latter of which signaled an answer so deficient as to merit zero credit.

The following figure summarizes scoring distributions for the 45 students who submitted this final exam essay.



Nearly every POLI 210 student (98 percent) wrote in a style deemed by the instructor to be at least satisfactory. The overwhelming majority of students (84 percent) wrote in a style rated as “excellent” or “very good.”

POLI 210 students exhibited similar success at providing and accurately citing appropriate evidence for their arguments, though there is somewhat more polarization in levels of achievement. Overall, 96 percent achieved this learning outcome (by scoring at “satisfactory” or above). A majority (56 percent) of students submitted essays rated as “excellent” in their use of evidence, even while the share in one of the middle achievement categories, “good,” also grew.

While some students have room for improvement in their writing style and their citation and use of evidence in argument, results overall are encouraging. Nearly every student leaves this lower-level political science GEP course having met these two skill-based learning outcomes, and the vast majority of them do so at an “excellent” or “very good” level.