

FAQ on General Education Revitalization 2017

Q1: What do you mean by General Education Revitalization?

In 2016-2017, the General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee (GEIAC) hosted campuswide events to enlist faculty input on how to make Gen Ed more coherent and meaningful for students. The result was a proposal (approved at GEIAC, University Curriculum, and Faculty Senate) for students to engage in a common activity across their Gen Ed courses in order to realize a small set of shared Gen Ed program outcomes. Thus, Gen Ed revitalization strives to highlight skills and understandings that are present in all disciplines.

Q2: What is this “common activity” to be completed in all Gen Ed courses?

The common activity entails adding two features to all Gen Ed courses: a Big Question (BQ) and a Signature Assignment (SA). With the BQ and SA, students will realize the four **Gen Ed Program Learning Outcomes** (GELOs): 1) *Content Knowledge*, 2) *Intellectual Tools*, 3) *Responsibility to Self and Others*, and 4) *Connected and Applied Learning*. The Gen Ed Mission also was refined to account for the GELOs (see <http://www.weber.edu/academicaffairs/gened.html>).

Q3: So now I have to assess four more learning outcomes in my Gen Ed course?

No, you will continue to assess your Gen Ed courses as you have on the outcomes for your respective core and breadth areas. This will ensure continued compliance with the USHE Board of Regents and [R470](#) (see specifically R470-3: General Education Policy). Assessment of SAs for the four GELOs will be managed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) and will examine proficiency and growth in students' SA performance over their Gen Ed courses. OIE, the Provost's Office and GEIAC will work with any instructors, departments, or colleges who want to be involved in this program-level assessment.

Q4: Okay, then what do I have to do in my Gen Ed course?

By fall 2019, all faculty teaching Gen Ed will do the following:

- 1) Frame your Gen Ed course around a **Big Question (BQ)**. The BQ is open-ended, taps into the heart of the discipline, provides an opportunity for integration and connection to personal/social/professional issues, and addresses the question of “What can I do with this knowledge?”
- 2) Implement a **Signature Assignment (SA)**. The SA can be a new or existing activity that requires students to integrate and apply course content to address a significant personal, social, or professional question or issue in some way (through critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, inquiry and analysis, quantitative literacy, etc.) for a specified audience (e.g., peers, laypeople, expert in the field).

Q5: Do I have to call it a Signature Assignment?

Yes. This will help students learn that in each Gen Ed class they will have a similarly named assignment that taps into the same skills and understandings. This is also essential for the OIE to find your assignment (preferably in Canvas) for the purposes of assessment on the four GELOs.

Q6: Does someone have to approve my Big Question and Signature Assignment?

No, there is no approval/policing group assigned to review and approve BQs and SAs. Gen Ed Revitalization is a faculty-led effort to improve Gen Ed and foster student success, and faculty have autonomy and flexibility in the implementation of BQs and SAs. GEIAC, Area Committees, the Rollout Team, TLF, and Senate Executive will be briefed on BQs and SAs and will provide support and training for faculty to develop and apply them in all core and breadth areas of Gen Ed during 2017-2018.

Q7: How do I grade my Signature Assignment?

However you like! You can grade the SA how you wish (e.g., letter grade, complete/incomplete...) and ascribe to it any weight you choose in your course (e.g., 5%, 10%, 50% of course grade).

Q8: I'm still a little unclear what you mean by a BQ and SA. Do you have examples?

Absolutely - visit the General Education Website (<http://www.weber.edu/academicaffairs/gened.html>) for example BQs, SAs, and even a syllabus blurb that you can copy/paste into your syllabus.

Q9: What support is available to ensure I implement these changes correctly?

In addition to the resources on the Gen Ed webpage, the Gen Ed Rollout Team will host a Rollout Event in Fall 2017 (10/2) and will provide support and training to implement these changes in collaboration with GEIAC and TLA in 2017-2018.

Q10: Do I have to do this in every Gen Ed course and section?

Yes, if you want your Gen Ed course to continue to be a Gen Ed course. That said, you have some time (required by fall 2019) to make these changes.

Q11: How do I provide my assessment data to OIE?

SA should be distinctly labeled as "Signature Assignment" in Canvas. According to a yet to be determined assessment schedule, the OIE will download SA from Canvas and extract a blinded (only course title) random sample for review and assessment of GELOs. OIE will administer the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) to ~100 freshman each fall. This cohort will be followed through completion of the Associate's degree (and perhaps BS/BA). SA from cohort members will be downloaded each term and collected in an unpublished student portfolio. Assessment of students' first two SA will be compared against their final two SA. Departments will report annually the BQ and SA used in their gen ed courses and their reflection on "lessons learned" from implementing BQ and SA.

Q12: So just double checking, this is NOT optional?

Right, all Gen Ed courses will include a BQ and SA by fall 2019. Pilot data from select Gen Ed courses will be collected beginning in fall 2017. If you would like to join the Pilot Teams in 2017-18 (faculty receive a small stipend for their implementation work), contact Leigh Shaw (lshaw@weber.edu) or Molly Sween (mollysween@weber.edu).