

## St. Lawrence University Gen Ed DIV-13 Assessment Spring 2021 University Assessment Committee November 2023

In Spring 2021, the Assessment Committee began its first round of General Education assessment with courses that faculty members have designated as fulfilling the learning goals of our **DIV-13 graduation requirement**. This requirement was approved by the SLU faculty in 2013 as part of a larger curriculum revision.

Courses fulfilling the DIV-13 requirement have primary learning goals in which students develop:

- (a) an understanding of the nature and significance of diversity within and among groups;
- (b) an understanding of the dynamics of power and justice within and/or among groups and societies;
- (c) a capacity for critical self-reflection on social location, including how social location shapes human interactions.

To this end, the Assessment Committee developed a simple, 4 point rubric with the scoring levels of “absent”, “emerging”, “proficient” and “exemplary”. All faculty who taught one or more diversity courses in Spring 2021 were asked to participate. A total of 16 faculty did, contributing to 271 scored papers at the end of the Spring semester. About one third of the courses were 100-level courses and the rest were upper-level (200, 300, and 400-level) courses.

We then merged demographic information into the file, such as students’ class year, gender, and race/ethnicity, academic division of major, how many DIV-13 courses (including this one) taken thus far. Data were analyzed by student characteristics only (and not by course characteristics), as this is not a departmental assessment project but general education assessment. The discussion below is based on the frequency analyses.

### Overview of Findings

77% of all students who were assessed for (a) are meeting learning goal (a) develop an understanding of the nature and significance of diversity within and among groups. 74% who were assessed for (b) are meeting learning goal (b) develop an understanding of the dynamics of power and justice within and/or among groups and societies. 69% who were assessed for (c) are meeting learning goal (c) develop a capacity for critical self-reflection on social location, including how social location shapes human interactions (see Figure 1).

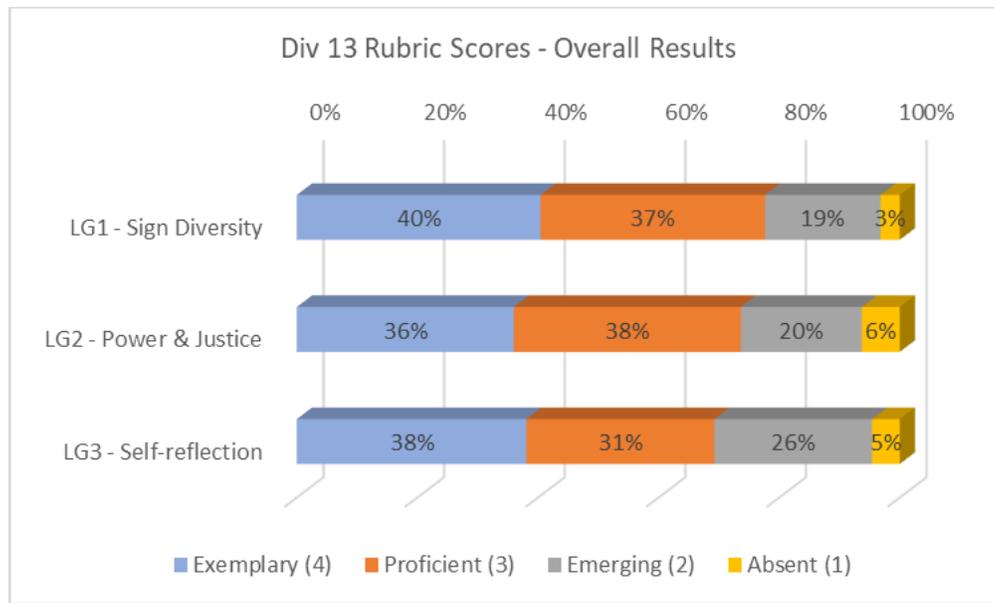


Figure 1: DIV-13 rubric scores.

LG 2 was assessed by the most papers (239), LG 1 by the fewest paper (188), with LG 3 falling in the middle (218), which suggests one of two conclusions: That on the whole, DIV-13 courses place a somewhat higher emphasis on LG 2, developing an understanding of the dynamics of power and justice within and/or among groups and societies; or that courses that focus on LG 2 tend to enroll more students.

Twice as many female-identifying students achieved the exemplary level on all 3 LGs as compared to male-identifying students. Overall, 18-20% of female-identifying and 29-47% of male-identifying students failed to reach at least a “proficient” level on the 3 LGs, with the third LG – critical self-reflection – exhibiting the lowest proficiency across both gender groups and the widest gender gap.

Mean scores for all 3 goals were higher for juniors and seniors (M = 3.1 to 3.3) than freshmen and sophomores (M = 2.9 to 3.2). The difference was most pronounced for LG 3 (M = 2.95 vs. 3.25). While these comparisons are cross-sectional, they would be consistent with the assertion that diversity learning appears to be cumulative.

**Other take-aways:**

- These data were collected during the COVID pandemic from hybrid and online-only courses. No in-person taught courses were included in the assessment.

**Conclusions**

- Our DIV13 learning goals are quite general; diversity learning goal is not specifically about race & racism but broader.

- Our students learn about diversity holistically (that is, outside of the classroom might be even more so than in class).
- The assignments used in the courses do not always align with the learning goals as assessed.
- Faculty comments often pointed out that the assessments were imperfect and did not necessarily tap the actual mastery of the 3 learning goals.
- Gender differences are pronounced, particularly on LG 3, but they may reflect effort, rather than actual ability.

**What questions would we like the Discipline Academic Community to discuss based on the data and conclusions from this assessment?**

How to close the gender gap in learning outcomes?

Would we need to incorporate the diversity requirement into the FYP?

How do chairs communicate to faculty and how do faculty communicate to students that their coursework aims to meet the specific learning goals of the DIV-13 requirement?

**Appendix 2 – Open-Ended Comments from Faculty**

Assessment

- Students did not allot equal amount of attention to all 3 learning goals. Goal 3 seems to have been ignored.
- I think that three out of five of the students whose learning was marked as "emerging" (for all three learning goals) probably are capable of demonstrating proficiency in at least two out of three of the learning goals, although they didn't do so in the assignment used for this assessment. For example, it asked them to define terms such as "diversity" and "social location," but the "emerging" students made statements such as "diversity is inclusivity" without explaining what "inclusivity" means. Examples they provided weren't necessarily helpful, either (e.g., "diverse celebrities support the Black Lives Matter organization and movement"). I think the students assumed that I as the reader knew that they already know what these terms mean, and so referred to them in ways that didn't directly demonstrate their learning.
- I had one senior who I think was in fact a very reflective person but who was majoring in literature and taking my course on a whim so essentially did not apply himself on the exercise and emerged with low marks on diversity. So, the instrument for measurement (a graded essay) was imperfect, but I do not have a better suggestion.
- Generally, I was disappointed with the results of this assignment. Students didn't reflect on popular contemporary American patriotism and what constitutes the American spirit in any sophisticated way. Upon reflection, while my goal of looking at the diverse ways people define their unique identities, my question needed to be reworked. Also students didn't invest the time and effort in answering the question. So, the learning

goal here has made me reflect about changing this assignment...I have to say that this goal is clunky for me. Really at the same time I was also asking students to reflect on their "social location" as Americans living in the 21st century. So the question bounces between the two learning goals, achieving neither in any sophisticated way among my students: It was disappointing.

- The high percentage of "exemplary" is very good for me to see as an instructor as it shows that they are applying previous knowledge to new assignments.

#### Rubric

- helpful
- useful

#### Learning Goals

- The assessment helped me to see that I need to do more work to help students understand what's meant by "justice" (in "dynamics of power and justice").
- I think these are the right learning goals, and well thought out.

RUBRIC FOR GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

**DIV13 Courses** have primary learning goals in which students develop:

- (a) an understanding of the nature and significance of diversity within and among groups, and;
- (b) an understanding of the dynamics of power and justice within and/or among groups and societies, and;
- (c) a capacity for critical self-reflection on social location, including how social location shapes human interactions.

Instructions:

1. Choose an individual course assignment in a DIV13 course from the second half of the semester in which students must demonstrate an understanding of one or more learning goals from above.
2. Score each student’s assignment and enter the score in the EXCEL spreadsheet that Christine will provide to you. (Mark with "x" the learning goal(s) that were not expected in the assignment.)
3. After scoring, please use the text box to provide feedback to the Assessment Committee reflecting on how the rubric and the scoring worked, what you learned from this assessment, and sharing any reflections on the Learning Goals as currently written.

LGs	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging	Absent
Understanding of the nature and significance of diversity within and among groups	Shows sophisticated understanding of the nature and significance of diversity within and among groups.	Shows sufficient understanding of the nature and significance of diversity within and among groups.	Shows minimal understanding of the nature and significance of diversity within and among groups.	Mark X if the student submitted the assignment, but evidence of an understanding of the LG was absent.  Mark NA if the student did not submit the assignment.
Understanding of the dynamics of power and justice within and/or among groups and societies	Shows sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of power and justice within and/or among groups and societies.	Shows sufficient understanding of the dynamics of power and justice within and/or among groups and societies.	Shows minimal understanding of the dynamics of power and justice within and/or among groups and societies.	Mark X if the student submitted the assignment, but evidence of an understanding of the LG was absent.  Mark NA if the student did not submit the assignment.

<p>A capacity for critical self-reflection on social location, including how social location shapes human interaction</p>	<p>Shows sophisticated capacity for critical self-reflection on social location.</p>	<p>Shows sufficient capacity for critical self-reflection on social location.</p>	<p>Shows minimal capacity for critical self-reflection on social location.</p>	<p>Mark X if the student submitted the assignment, but evidence of a capacity for critical self-reflection on social location was absent.</p> <p>Mark NA if the student did not submit the assignment.</p>
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