

Assessment of General Education

Faculty Debriefing
Thursday March 13, 2003 3:00p – 4:00p

Discussion Notes

In attendance:

Greg Burg
Johannes Feddema
Robert Gregory
Kissan Joseph

Angela Lumpkin
George McCleary
Kathleen McCluskey-Fawcett
Jim Rowland

Steve Shawl
Dave Shulenburg
Lloyd Sponholtz
Jack Weller

Impressions of the Interview Experience

Gregory: Had a good first night and bad experience second night because of differences in how the team leaders organized the interviews and interacted with students. Praised George McCleary's ability to put the student at ease and to shape the interview questions to fit the students' experiences. The interviews conducted by the George's team did not leave the students feeling "beat up," as they appeared to on his second night of interviewing.

Lumpkin: Praised the organization of the process—felt like everything ran smoothly.

Weller: Was concerned about a student who felt "beat up," after the interview and wanted to be sure that it was okay for him to reiterate that this process was an assessment of how well KU had done to impart a general education, and not a test of the student.

Usefulness of the Interview Questions

Feddema: Was frustrated with the questions. Recommends more standardization, where every student would be asked the same set of questions. Thought there was too much variability in the questions, and consequently in the answers, to make comparable judgments about whether students had met the goals.

Would like to see no more than two questions per goal. Would like for them to be open-ended enough that the interviewers would be likely to know enough about the answers to make sound judgments. Thought that some of the questions were so specific that even the interviewers could not frame up the best answers.

Lumpkin: Was dissatisfied with the questions and her inability to determine what constituted a good answer. Would like to have more standardization of the questions. Thought there were too many questions covering individual goals. Would like to see a small set of "boiler-plate" questions that could be tailored to a student's experiences and educational background, with a standard scoring methodology.

Felt like the interview was more successful in assessing what students had learned in their last two years, than in their general education courses.

Joseph: Thought the existing questions allowed sufficient flexibility to customize them to fit a student's educational profile. Does not favor stricter standardization of the questions. Thinks it would make it more difficult to rephrase and reshape questions that student's can't answer.

Usefulness of the Interview Questions (continued)

Shawl: Also likes the flexibility of the existing questions. Freely rephrases and reframes the questions to draw out students. Thinks that more standardization would hurt the conversational flow of the interviews.

Weller: Also likes the flexibility afforded by the existing questions. Wants to be able to use them to link students to a particular topic.

Rowland: Recognizes a need to rework the questions in order to clarify what constitutes a strong answer.

Possible Cultural Bias in the Questions

Feddema: Said the questions were really geared to American students, and didn't fit the cultural experiences of international students.

Burg: Thought that answers to the citizenship question could be very affected by cultural differences.

Favorite Questions

Burg: Likes the nature vs. nurture question

Feddema: Likes the technology question about how computers relate to ethics.

Lumpkin: Asked students the question, "What does being an educated person mean to you?" Felt like this question allowed students to loosen up and get into the flow of the interview. Felt like answers to this question also helped her to make judgments about Goal 3.

McCluskey-Fawcett: Likes to begin with "Do you vote?" and because either answer can be followed up with questions relevant to the general education goals.

Optimizing the Flow of the Interview

Rowland: Having "old timers" on the interview teams helps to teach new interviewers how to use the questions to establish a conversational flow for the interview. Likes for everyone to be able to ask any of the questions. Liked to let the new interviewer choose the questions they wanted to ask, with the "old timers" filling in the gaps.

Burg: Has done the "round-robin" type of interviewing as well as the "dialogue" type of interviewing. Both can work.

McCleary: Likes to sit down with his team and script out the first two or three questions, before letting go with a "free for all" interviewing style. Feels like some careful planning of who will ask the first few questions helps to establish a comfortable flow to the interview.

Liked getting the questions at training, so he could review them and think them through before the first night of the interviews.

Rowland: Read the students the goal before asking the question.

Optimizing the Flow of the Interview (continued)

Gregory: Would like for the students to have the goals in front of them during the interview.

Judging the Quality of Students' Responses

McCluskey-Fawcett: Felt like the multi-faceted nature of the goals made it difficult to make a single judgment about a student's attainment.

McCleary: Suggested giving a student two scores per goal—one on how well they could think through a process and answer verbally, and the second on the actual content of their answer.

Measuring "KU-Added" General Knowledge

Feddema: Was also frustrated that he couldn't separate what the students knew prior to entering KU and what they actually learned at KU as a result of their general education experiences.

Lumpkin: Reiterated Feddema's frustration

Feddema: Would like ask the students how their general education courses contributed to their overall education.

The Impact of Students' Field of Study on a Well-Rounded Education

Feddema: Had one interview where it was clear the KU had failed in providing a useful general education. Wondered how much of this student's inability to think through ethical issues was a function of cultural difference, because this student was from Indonesia, or because the student's field of Pharmacy was so narrowly focused.

Shulenburger: Reminded him that was why multiple students were interviewed from the same school—so that the performance of one particular student would not unduly color the impression of all students in a particular field of study.

Burg: Whether a student has a narrow focus may not be a function of their exposure to other coursework. Had a Pharmacy student with a broad array of coursework, but who was still narrowly focused.

Gregory: Thought the Fine Arts students were somewhat narrowly focused, but were very good at answering questions about the Arts, which is an aspect of general education.

McCluskey-Fawcett: Thought that some of the most well-rounded students were the Music Education/Music Therapy students because of their exposure to courses in the Fine Arts as well as Education.