

Signature Assignment Ins-and-Outs

GE Course Requirements

- Every GE course should map to at least 3 GE learning outcomes (GELOs). Current learning outcomes assigned in the GE Program are listed at <http://ge.sonoma.edu/resources>.
- The GELOs identified in the course must include the specific GELOs listed for the particular distribution area that houses the course (as shown on the Application Cover Sheet).
- Every faculty member teaching a GE course **must** participate in a GE professional development workshop prior to or during the first semester in which they are teaching GE.
- Every GE course must include a signature assignment.

Signature Assignments

A GE signature assignment is real-world application of knowledge that addresses two or more of the GELOs and is accompanied by a reflection. It does not need to be an additional assignment, but one that you already incorporate into your course.¹

As a participant in the GE program, every department and faculty launching a GE course must be willing to provide signature assignments (instructions and student artifacts) for assessment.

The signature assignment must fit the following criteria:

- Includes an activity and self-reflection - this may be done using multiple assignment components if appropriate
- Is mapped to at least two of the identified GELOs for the course, prioritizing those specified for the distribution area
- Involves student performance on something other than a test (e.g. essays, art galleries, projects, presentations, lab reports, service learning journals, websites, posters, creative writing, creative combinations²)
- Counts toward a student's grade

Notes for Effective Signature Assignments

Signature assignments ask students to demonstrate learning and integrate or apply the knowledge they have learned throughout the GE course.

- The assignment prompt should provide explicit guidelines on how the assignment is aligned to the GELOs, how students can complete the project, and how you will evaluate their work.
- Students are more apt to engage in the signature assignment if it sparks intellectual curiosity. Try to create an assignment that students would want to showcase after the semester is over by making the assignment relevant to their lives or enjoyable.
- The reflection component of the signature assignment should prompt students to make connections between concepts within the signature activity, across the class, across their major, across their degree as a whole, with their community, and/or within themselves as they grow and change. Reflection has been shown to enhance student learning.³
- In addition, if the course is upper division B, C, or D, the reflection component should directly prompt the students to integrate what they have learned in the course with what they have learned in lower division coursework within that distribution area.⁴

Assessment

Student artifacts will be assessed for progress towards GELO achievement by faculty assessment teams after the course is completed. Scoring rubrics will be developed by faculty teams based on AAC&U VALUE rubrics, modified to meet SSU outcomes and assessment goals.⁵ The department should explain what student artifacts will be submitted for assessment. Signature assignments may change with each iteration and with different faculty teaching the course. Care should be taken that the criteria for the assignment are met and that departments are able to submit the artifacts in some form for assessment.

¹ Salt Lake Community College Faculty ePortfolio Resource Site: <https://facultyportfolioresource.weebly.com/>

² Some sample assignments can be found at University of Texas at Austin's signature course site: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/sig/plan/samples>

³ For example, see Di Stefano et al., 2014, Learning by Thinking: How Reflection Aids Performance <http://www.sc.edu/usconnect/doc/Learning%20by%20Thinking.%20How%20Reflection%20Aids%20Performance.pdf>

⁴ Examples of reflection prompts are available at Salt Lake Community College Resource Site: <https://facultyportfolioresource.weebly.com/reflection.html>

⁵ Samples can be found at <https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics>.