

Assessment of the Associate of Arts in General Studies Degree 2003-2004

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Brief Description of degree program

The Associate of Arts in General Studies (AAGS) degree was designed with the idea in mind that all students are unique individuals with unique educational goals and interests.

Students' responses on the AAGS survey-which all students obtaining the degree must complete-have shown us that our students have very personal, very different reasons for seeking the degree. We understand that some students wish to obtain the degree for professional advancement within a company, while others may want to use it as a stepping stone to a bachelor's degree.

The AAGS program consists of a fifteen-hour core curriculum that is a foundation for and requirement of most UALR bachelor's degrees. The remaining 49 hours (for a total of 64) may be taken in any area(s) of study chosen by the student, provided that at least 20 hours of all course work are above the freshman level. For students graduating under the **Fall 2003 Undergraduate Catalog or later, 44 hours of core curriculum are required.** See the Associate of Arts in General Studies Degree Plan - Fall 2003 in the Download Forms section. The UALR core curriculum may vary by academic program requirements.

Goals and objectives of assessment plan

The AAGS degree program centers on the following four goals:

1. Providing students with the opportunity to complete a non-specialized curriculum based on individual choice or needs.
2. Helping students to view this degree as progress toward educational goals.
 - o Forty-seven (58%) have already declared a bachelor's degree major, clearly indicating an intent to continue in school.
3. Enabling transfer students to maximize the number of credit hours applicable toward the degree.
 - o The average number of hours transferred is 18.7, with a range of from 3 to 84 credit hours.
4. Providing students with a means of professional advancement and development of specific career related skills.
 - o As indicated on the student survey, "job opportunity and advancement" continues to be a leading reason why students seek the AAGS.

The Associate of Arts in General Studies degree program focuses on two student learning objectives:

1. To provide students with the knowledge of a common fifteen-hour core curriculum, with the remainder of the program chosen by the student. Increasingly throughout the program, students will gain a better understanding of their strengths and interests.
2. To acquire a level of written competency, as measured by the WPE. As noted before, the WPE was phased out from UALR graduation requirements, and it is no longer administered.

Use of assessment for program building and improvement

Associate of Arts in General Studies (AAGS) assessment findings and their use toward making decisions to understand and improve the program

The proposed changes to the AAGS program were passed in spring, 2003. Students who file a degree plan under a 2003-2004 or subsequent catalog will meet the new program requirements. The AAGS program will require the completion of UALR's 44 credit hour core curriculum and 20 credit hours of electives. This is in line with ADHE guidelines concerning associate of arts degrees.

The Writing Proficiency Examination (WPE) was eliminated as a graduation requirement for all students receiving a degree after May, 2003.

Assessment efforts this year have again focused on understanding the characteristics of the students seeking this degree. This information assists in marketing the degree to students.

The program is assessed by reviewing: 1) results of the WPE; 2) the student surveys; 3) demographic data obtained from BANNER; 4) worksheet (transcript) analysis; and 5) the annual ACT Alumni Survey.

Eighty-one (81) students filed degree plans in 2003-2004 and were included in this year's report. Thirty-seven (37) were transfer students (46%), and forty-four were native UALR students (54%). Nine (9) native UALR students also presented transfer credits for the degree. Students submitted 70 transcripts from 35 different colleges. The top two transfer institutions continue to be Pulaski Technical College and the University of Central Arkansas, which are also the top two transfer colleges to UALR.

Main findings and interpretation:

AAGS Enrollment Trend. The number of students seeking the Associate of Arts in General Studies is steadily increasing. The following chart shows the growth in the last five years.

	Total	% Increase
2003-2004	81	8
2002-2003	75	7

2001-2002	70	1
2000-2001	69	15
1999-2000	60	

WPE. The Writing Proficiency Examination requirement was eliminated for students receiving a degree from UALR after May, 2003. AAGS students whose catalog year was 1998-1999 or later were required to pass the WPE, until the WPE was eliminated.

Of the 81 students in 2003-2004, 71 were not required to take the WPE because: 1) they were under a catalog prior to 1998-1999, or 2) the graduation date was after May, 2003. Ten (10) students were required to take it, and all 10 passed it. Of the 71 students who were not required to take the WPE, 32 students took and passed it before the requirement was eliminated.

Student Survey. The student survey addresses the question of why students apply for the AAGS. Students can check as many responses as apply. The results are:

- Job opportunity and advancement – 33
- Personal satisfaction – 50
- Half way to a bachelor’s degree – 35
- Intend to transfer – 6
- Meet AAGS degree requirements – 12

“Personal satisfaction” continues to be an important reason students apply for the AAGS, followed by “job opportunity and advancement” and “half way to a bachelor’s degree.”

The survey also reveals how students learn about the AAGS.

- Read about it in Undergraduate Catalog – 34
- Read about it on a bulletin board – 2
- Heard about it from friends/teachers – 32
- Heard about it from advisor - 24

Demographics. The average age for the 2003-04 group is 31, as it was also in 02-03. The average age of the general UALR undergraduate population for the past three spring semesters (04, 03, 02) was 27. Several students seeking the AAGS either have returned to school after a lengthy absence or have been in and out of school several times or attend UALR part time. Students applying for the AAGS tend to be older than the UALR undergraduate population in general, and they want the degree for the personal satisfaction of having a degree to show for the work they have completed.

The gender analysis reveals that more women than men apply for the AAGS.

	Female	Male
2003-2004	80 %	20 %
2002-2003	75 %	25 %
2001-2002	63 %	37 %

In 2003-2004 UALR students outnumbered transfer students seeking the AAGS. The following table reveals the past five year trend.

	UALR #	UALR %	Transfer #	Transfer %
2003-2004	44	54%	37	46%
2002-2003	36	48%	39	52%
2001-2002	30	43%	40	57%
2000-2001	23	33%	36	67%
1999-2000	30	50%	30	50%

Proposed changes

The changes proposed were passed in the spring of 2003 and are effective for students who will graduate under a 2003-2004 catalog. No new changes are proposed for the coming year.

Faculty and stake holder involvement

The AAGS degree is not offered by an academic college. The courses required are a part of UALR's core curriculum, and the courses are assessed by their respective academic departments.

Students participate in the assessment process by completing the AAGS student survey and the ACT Alumni Survey.

The Office of Counseling and Career Planning Services, University College , mailed the ACT Alumni Survey to all 2001 graduates in July, 2002. Results are now available. Four students receiving the AAGS responded. Two report being employed at Acxiom Corporation, and two reported "NA" to the survey. The salaries ranged (including the 2 who reported "NA") from \$14,999-less to \$50,000-59,999.

The Office of Academic Advising of University College shares information obtained from the annual ACT Alumni Outcome Survey with other students who are considering this degree. The ACT Alumni Outcome Survey contains information about students' current position and salaries.

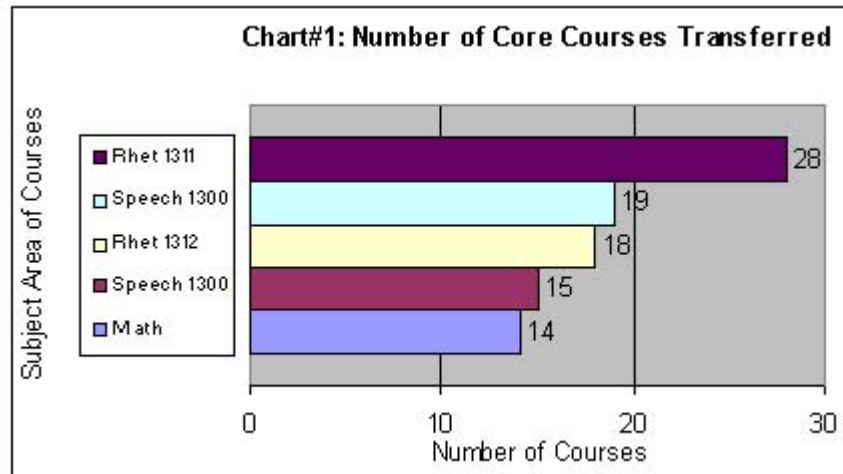
Approach

Methods used to measure student learning outcome objectives

Objective 1: To provide students with the knowledge of a common fifteen-hour core curriculum with the remainder of the program chosen by the student.

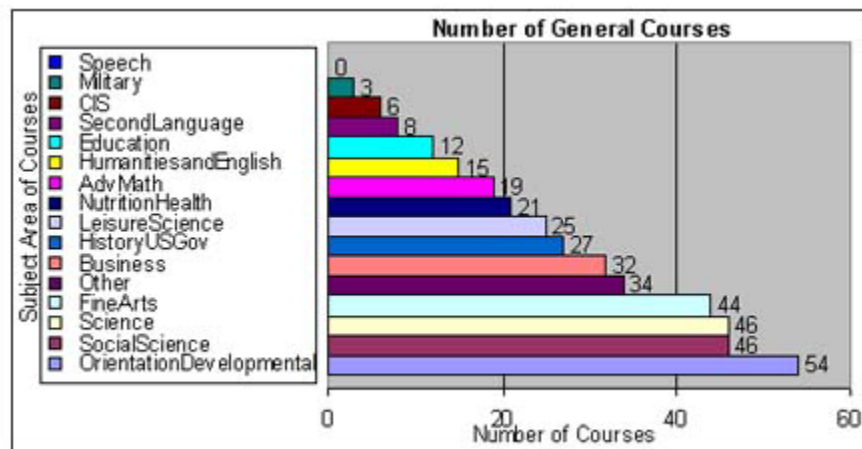
For native UALR students, the 15 hour core consists of courses from five academic departments: Rhetoric and Writing, Math, History or Political Science, and Speech. These core courses are assessed as a part of their respective department assessment plans.

For transfer students, a count is made of the number of core courses transferred. (see Chart #1) Composition I is the core course which is transferred most often.



To assess “the remainder of the program chosen by the student”, courses are counted and grouped by general categories for both native UALR and transfer students. Native UALR students tend to work toward completion of the general 44 hour core curriculum and toward their chosen major requirements.

The goal of maximizing transfer students' credit hours is realized in the diversity of courses transferred. An example is that military credits count toward the 64 credit hours of the AAGS. (see Chart #2)



Objective 2: Written Competency.

This objective is measured by the WPE exam. Beginning with the 1998-1999 catalog, the WPE has been required. For the 2002-2003 year, all 46 students who took the WPE have passed it.

Changes in assessment plan for next year

The department will continue using the same instruments: a student survey, transcript analysis, and the annual ACT Alumni Outcome Survey.

Plans for assessment in the 2004-2005 year

The Office of Academic Advising (University College) will make adjustments in assessing the AAGS to account for the proposed changes in the degree. Some students under the new program plan (2003-2004 and later catalog) will begin to be reflected in the statistics for next year.

Goals

2003-2004

Program goals were reviewed and modified to reflect the change in the AAGS core curriculum. The first program goal for students under the new requirements will be to require students to complete a non-specialized curriculum based upon the 44 credit hour UALR core curriculum, with the remaining 20 credit hours of the degree reflecting individual choice or needs.

The student learning objective will be that the AAGS degree program will prepare students to continue for a bachelor's degree by requiring the 44 credit hour core curriculum. As stated in the catalog, the purpose of the core curriculum is to establish a foundation for the undergraduate academic experience and to ensure that students develop fundamental skills and a lifelong commitment and ability to learn.

2004-2005

A goal for the 2004-2005 year will be to revise the student survey to obtain more information related to goals and objectives.

Additionally, an assessment goal for 2004-2005 will be to: 1) compile data for the past five years so that trends in enrollment can be reviewed, and 2) monitor students to determine how many continue at UALR after receiving the AAGS.

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