

Georgia Highlands College

Information Competency Program

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Executive Summary

Need information? The first impulse of many students is to simply search the internet, grab some information, and go. Often they access inappropriate information, use the information without sufficient analysis or evaluation, and then reference it poorly when communicating it.

The mission of the Georgia Highlands College (GHC) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to create a curriculum-wide culture of information competency (IC) among students, which will be demonstrated through writing or other modes of communication (such as oral communication). IC is defined by the college as the ability to recognize what type of information is needed, locate that information, evaluate it, and use it effectively. Guided by the Association of Research and College Libraries standards on information literacy, GHC has defined four student learning outcomes (SLOs) based on students' ability to:

- **determine the nature and extent of information needed**
- **access the needed information effectively and efficiently**
- **evaluate information and its sources critically**
- **demonstrate IC through writing or other modes of communication**

The QEP was designed to provide critical student skills, assist faculty in teaching those skills, and verify student achievement of IC skills. The QEP will integrate IC skill development across the entire curriculum for the associate of art and associate of science degree programs and career programs, including learning support courses, core curriculum courses, and major program of study courses. The QEP focuses on an individualized approach that augments current IC efforts by each academic division and does not impose a standardized IC format on all divisions. Continual assessment of the four SLOs will generate feedback as the basis for annual revision of the QEP in order to assure student success.

Beginning with communication and computer skills courses in 2007-08, IC skills will be integrated into each of the five required core curriculum areas at GHC (Areas A-E) sequentially. Courses related to program of study (Area F – these courses will be divided and implemented by division across the five years of the QEP), career programs, and learning support courses will be included beginning in 2008-09.

Assessment of the SLOs includes curriculum-wide assessment and individual project assessment. GHC has developed a brief IC instrument that is given to all entering students at Fall orientation sessions and later administered as a post-test to continuing students as the campus-wide assessment of general IC skills. Specific evaluation tools for the IC projects in Year One have been developed; the projects for the other core curriculum areas will be developed as implementation progresses. Annual assessment reports will provide feedback for changes needed to assure achievement of the SLOs.

IC was chosen as the focus of the QEP after an extensive and broad based involvement of faculty, staff and students. Town hall meetings, focus groups, faculty meetings, divisional meetings, and student forums all discussed possible topics for the college's QEP. Students have continued to be actively involved as the college prepares its QEP, evidenced by a student contest that led to the design of the logo for IC as well as student membership on the QEP Authoring Committee. Although the phrase "information literacy" is more commonly used to refer to the skills that GHC is emphasizing with the QEP, the college felt that "information competency" best described the outcome that we are working toward in this project.

The college administration has committed new resources and redirected existing resources to assure success of the QEP. GHC faculty members are optimistic about the impact of this QEP on student lives. GHC provides an essential foundation for students in their future academic, professional, and personal life choices, and strong IC skills are needed for success in these choices. The goal of this QEP is to assure that all GHC students have these skills, enabling them to be more successful communicators.