

A Framework for the Assessment of General Education

As a set of institutional learning expectations, General Education is the signature curriculum for any college. In order to earn a bachelor's degree at Hunter, students devote at least one-third of their program to General Education, and the faculty offers hundreds of courses with writing assignments, readings, and other class projects and activities matched to General Education learning outcomes. The purpose of comprehensive assessment of General Education is to define and analyze how our signature curriculum can best serve our students. The major question of this assessment--as well as any assessment--is how well we are meeting the learning outcomes of General Education. Our General Education assessment may also be guided by questions such as: Do lower division General Education courses adequately support expectations once students enter advanced work in their majors? If not, what realignments in the curriculum make sense? What resources are needed to implement any improvements in General Education identified by the assessment?

Since "General Education" is by definition is a large sub-set of Institutional Learning Outcomes, Institutional Learning Outcomes must be agreed upon by the Senate and academic programs and departments. After Institutional Learning Outcomes are made available and adopted, we will standardize the nomenclature to define the relationship among General Education, Pathways, and Institutional Learning Outcomes.

As is the case with all learning outcomes assessment, faculty will own the design and process of the General Education assessment. To avoid redundant effort while maximizing understanding of General Education, we will

- Use established assessment practices from programs like math and writing, as there will be few changes to make the current procedures applicable to an assessment of General Education,
- Use previous assessments where possible to gather more data and extend our understanding of student learning through time.
- Use assessment in the majors as part of General Education assessment, where possible
- Assess across levels—from introductions to capstones--and areas for comprehensive understanding

Recommended Actions:

1. Coordination. The responsibility for meeting all goals and objectives of assessment--a major ongoing effort-- will be driven by departments offering the required General Education courses. That is, the math department should have responsibility for assessing General Education math courses, the English Department writing courses, and so on. Assessment across departments will be a collaboration of those departments' Assessment Coordinators. For example, the assessment of the Individual and Society outcomes will be a collaboration between the departments offering those courses (such as psychology and sociology, for example), depending on the outcomes assessed. The Assessment Coordinators of each department should determine the best methods and rubrics for assessment through advising from the Office of Assessment.

Rubrics should be aligned with official learning outcomes. The Office of Assessment can advise on rubrics and determine where standard, nationally normed rubrics might be revised to fit assessment of Hunter's signature curriculum. The faculty teaching the General Education courses or courses in the major being assessed evaluate the assessment sample. In relevant courses that assess information literacy, faculty librarians will collaborate with disciplinary teaching faculty on procedures and rubrics for assessment as well as participate in the evaluation of the sample. The departments, programs, and schools participating in General Education Assessment will communicate with the two relevant Senate committees, the General Education Requirements Committee and the Committee on Academic Assessment and Evaluation. These committees as well as the campus-wide Assessment Coordinators Advisory Board and the Office of Assessment can advise on procedures for assessment and keep assessment led by faculty.

2. General Education Website. The department Assessment Coordinators will post relevant information and plans for assessment on the website of the Office of Assessment to keep faculty and administration informed of progress and recommendations, as they are developed.
3. Identification of Outcomes. General Education is a large program with many parts and options, but not every learning outcome needs to be assessed, especially in the flexible core. The attached timeline shows what courses will be assessed and the departments participating in General Education assessment will specify the outcomes they will be assessing through advising from the Office of Assessment. It's critical that departments communicate with each other through the Assessment Coordinators Committee to identify in advance which learning outcomes will be addressed.
4. Adoption of a Five-Year Plan. Once there is a list of assessment targets, they should be sequenced for attention through the assessment cycle. The plan should be manageable, in terms of the kinds and amounts of assessment scheduled by semester.
5. Sampling, Rubrics, and Division of Labor. With the particular assessment goals in mind for the following semester, the department Assessment Coordinators must determine
 - ✓ if and where regular ongoing assessment in the majors will be useful for General Education assessment,
 - ✓ which courses in addition to those already scheduled for program assessment will provide samples of student work, according to the plan,
 - ✓ which rubrics (and possibly outcomes) are needed,
 - ✓ which faculty who teach the courses will do the evaluation of student work, and
 - ✓ what are the appropriate samples, both in terms of size and coverage.
6. Collection, Presentation, and Analysis of Data. Department Assessment Coordinators will collate data with assistance from the Office of Assessment and collaboration with any relevant departments. The coordinators, with department and program faculty, will determine how assessment results will be used and collaborate on areas of improvement. Performance on General Education outcomes can be reported by course level (upper division and lower division), by outcome, by component (Required Core, Flexible Core, College Focus), and in other ways. Departments involved in General Education Assessment will produce annual evaluations and collaborate on a summative report at the conclusion of the five-year cycle, with recommendations for improvement and further requests for resources if warranted.

Resources Needed:

- Institutional Learning Outcomes should be distributed and adopted across departments.
- Each department should have an Assessment Coordinator who earns one course release per semester for assessment activities.
- Funding will be provided to pay evaluators when they are part-time faculty at the same hourly rate they earn when teaching.
- For their efforts developing, instituting, and following up on this assessment plan, the Chairs of the Senate Assessment and General Educations Requirements Committees shall receive one course release per year.
- Teaching faculty must be aware of which courses they teach qualify for General Education, and they must indicate the relevant General Education learning outcomes on the syllabus and arrange for assignments appropriate to the learning outcomes that will be assessed. Advance planning is essential.

Timeline: Assessment will begin in fall 2017 and continue each semester. We plan on an assessment cycle of five years for completion of all General Education learning outcomes.

Academic Year	Assessment Activities
2017-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 10/11: Tom will briefly talk about this process at Senate. ● Mid-October: GER Committee and Committee on Assessment and Evaluation to meet and discuss. Both committees to also review the GER Assessment Framework document. ● 10/25: deadline for submitting questions to the Senate office. ● 11/8: Senate discussion on ILOs and Assessment Plan ● 11/29: Adoption of documents. ● 12/6: GER Assessment Framework brought to the Senate ● December: Identify which outcomes will be assessed in English 120 ● Spring: Identify which outcomes will be assessed in English 220 ● Spring/Summer: Complete assessment of composition
2018-19	Required Core: Math and Quantitative Reasoning (all outcomes) Flexible Core: All Domains for the common outcomes (Assessment will cover corresponding areas for ILO's)
2019-2020	Required Core: Life and Physical Sciences (all outcomes)
2020-2021	Flexible Core: Elective outcomes Humanities and Social Science Outcomes within "Individual and Society"
2021-2022	Hunter Focus Pluralism and Diversity ILO's: Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility

Appendix: General Education Requirements and Learning Outcomes