

## A Framework for the Assessment of General Education

### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

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 prepare students to 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 the foundation for Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), ILOs 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 relationships among General Education, Pathways, and Institutional Learning Outcomes.

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

1. 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
2. Use previous assessments where possible to gather more data and extend our understanding of student learning through time
3. Use assessment in the majors as part of General Education assessment, where possible
4. Assess across levels—from introductions to capstones--and areas for comprehensive understanding

As an institutional requirement, assessment of General Education requires an institutional effort. **This institutional effort will remain faculty-driven and -owned while being a collaboration with relevant administrative entities.**

In line with its charge, the Senate Committee on General Education Requirements will work closely, in joint meetings as needed, with the Senate Select Committee on Academic Assessment and Evaluation for the purposes of assessing General Education. Since the Offices of the Provost and the Dean of Arts and Sciences provide these committees with *ex officio* members, these committees will also provide the locus for collaboration between faculty and administration.

### **II. ADMINISTRATION:**

The administration of this institutional assessment is to be the result of coordination among three entities: A) The Senate Committee on the General Education Requirements working with the Senate Select Committee on Academic Assessment and Evaluation, B) faculty, departments, and programs offering General Education Courses, C) the Office of the Provost. The responsibilities of each of these is as follows:

**A) The Senate Committee on the General Education Requirements working with the Senate Select Committee on Academic Assessment and Evaluation** will have the following responsibilities:

1. Develop and approve all policies and plans related to General Education assessment, including the semester-by-semester determination of what outcomes are to be assessed. Not every learning outcome needs to be assessed every semester.
2. Initiate these policies and plans for assessment of General Education in accordance with the timeline set out in this framework.
3. Make recommendations for the improvement of General Education to the Senate and relevant departments and programs, as needed, based on assessment reports.
4. Provide regular reports on the assessment of General Education to the Senate.
5. Periodically review this Framework and the assessment plan to determine whether they are being implemented effectively at the college.
6. Initiate the process of revising any aspect of this Framework in the Senate.

**B) The Departments and Programs offering the courses in General Education** will assess a sample. That is, the Math Department will assess General Education math courses, the English Department will assess composition courses, and so on. With regard to assessment of areas that involve multiple departments (for example, courses within Individual and Society), collaboration between Assessment Coordinators in the various departments will be facilitated by the Office of Assessment and will be conducted by the designated department Assessment Coordinators offering those courses. Faculty teaching the courses being assessed will do the assessment of the sample. In 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. Department or Program Assessment Coordinators will thus have the following responsibilities:

1. Work with the Office of Assessment to develop and/or align rubrics and current departmental assessment practices with General Education and Institutional Learning Outcomes.
2. Inform teaching faculty 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.
3. Select and evaluate the sample for assessment.
4. Analyze and determine a response to assessment results.
5. Report these activities to the Provost's Office, Dean's Office, and Office of Assessment.

**C) The Office of the Provost** will have the following responsibilities:

1. Conduct the practical administration and coordination of the assessment work described in this Framework. This coordination includes enlisting the relevant entities in the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences, facilitating the collaboration of departments when assessing Flexible Core outcomes, and ensuring the assessments are completed according to the Timeline below.
2. Collect and organize the data from the assessments completed at the department and program level.
3. Provide regular reports to the Senate Committees on General Education Requirements and Academic Assessment and Evaluation on the data reported by departments and programs.
4. Provide reports, when necessary, to the joint Senate Committees on General Education Requirements and Academic Assessment and Evaluation on the effectiveness of this process.

### III. REPORTING:

The Senate Committee on General Education and the Senate Select Committee Assessment and Evaluation jointly will report to the Senate annually and produce a summative report at the conclusion of the five-year cycle.

A summary report of assessment of General Education will be available to the Hunter community. All assessment data will be used solely for the improvement of General Education and none will be used punitively as per the Resolution on the Use of Assessment Results passed by the Hunter College Senate on November 11, 2015.

### IV. TIMELINE:

The timeline for General Education assessment will proceed in a repeating five-year cycle:

Academic Year	Assessment Activities
2017-2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Senate will vote on the Framework for Assessment of General Education and the Institutional Learning Outcomes</li><li>• English Composition: All outcomes</li><li>• Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: All outcomes</li></ul>
2018-2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flexible Core: All outcomes and associated ILOs</li></ul>
2019-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Required Core: Life and Physical Sciences (all outcomes)</li></ul>
2020-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flexible Core: Elective outcomes</li></ul>
2021-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hunter Focus</li><li>• Concurrent course requirements for Pluralism and Diversity and Writing Intensive Courses</li><li>• ILOs: Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility</li></ul>

### V. AMENDMENTS:

The Senate General Education Requirements Committee and Assessment and Evaluation Committee can, at any time, introduce to the Senate alterations in the assessment plan, proposals for improvements in General Education, and/or recommendations for resources. This assessment framework and all related materials may be amended by a majority vote of the Hunter College Senate.

### VI: RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Institutional Learning Outcomes should be distributed across departments.
2. The college administration should provide additional resources as needed to departments and programs to conduct effective assessments of the GER.
3. The Senate should develop learning outcomes for the Hunter Focus, Pluralism and Diversity requirement, and Writing Intensive courses by the fall 2018 semester.
4. For their efforts developing, instituting, and following up on this assessment plan, the Chairs of the Senate Assessment and General Education Requirements Committees should receive one course release per year.

## VII. APPENDIX: GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES

Required Common Core (12 credits / 4 courses)

- English Composition (2 courses)
- Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning (1 course)
- Life and Physical Sciences (1 course)

Learning Outcomes Common Core

English Composition: A course in this area must meet all of the following learning outcomes. A student will:

5. Read and listen critically and analytically, including identifying an argument's major assumptions and assertions and evaluating its supporting evidence.
6. Write clearly and coherently in varied, academic formats (such as formal essays, research papers, and reports) using standard English and appropriate technology to critique and improve one's own and others' texts.
7. Demonstrate research skills using appropriate technology, including gathering, evaluating, and synthesizing primary and secondary sources.
8. Support a thesis with well-reasoned arguments, and communicate persuasively across a variety of contexts, purposes, audiences, and media.
9. Formulate original ideas and relate them to the ideas of others by employing the conventions of ethical attribution and citation.

Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: A course in this area must meet all of the following learning outcomes. A student will:

1. Interpret and draw appropriate inferences from quantitative representations, such as formulas, graphs, or tables.
2. Use algebraic, numerical, graphical, or statistical methods to draw accurate conclusions and solve mathematical problems.
3. Represent quantitative problems expressed in natural language in a suitable mathematical format.
4. Effectively communicate quantitative analysis or solutions to mathematical problems in written or oral form.
5. Evaluate solutions to problems for reasonableness using a variety of means, including informed estimation.
6. Apply mathematical methods to problems in other fields of study.

Life and Physical Sciences: A course in this area must meet all of the following learning outcomes. A student will:

1. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a life or physical science.
2. Apply the scientific method to explore natural phenomena, including hypothesis development, observation, experimentation, measurement, data analysis, and data presentation.
3. Use the tools of a scientific discipline to carry out collaborative laboratory investigations.
4. Gather, analyze, and interpret data and present it in an effective written laboratory or fieldwork report.
5. Identify and apply research ethics and unbiased assessment in gathering and reporting scientific data.

Flexible Common Core (18 credits / 6 courses)

- World Cultures and Global Issues (1 course)
- U.S. Experience in Its Diversity (1 course)
- Creative Expression (1 course)
- Individual and Society (1 course)
- Scientific World (1 course)
- One additional course will be taken from one of the above areas.

Learning Outcomes Flexible Core:

All Flexible Core courses must meet the following three learning outcomes. A student will:

1. Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
2. Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
3. Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

World Cultures and Global Issues: A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

1. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures or global issues, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, ethnic studies, foreign languages (building upon previous language acquisition), geography, history, political science, sociology, and world literature.
2. Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.
3. Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies.
4. Analyze the significance of one or more major movements that have shaped the world's societies. Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.
5. Speak, read, and write a language other than English, and use that language to respond to cultures other than one's own.

U.S. Experience in its Diversity: A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

1. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the U.S. experience in its diversity, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, history, political science, psychology, public affairs, sociology, and U.S. literature.
2. Analyze and explain one or more major themes of U.S. history from more than one informed perspective.
3. Evaluate how indigenous populations, slavery, or immigration have shaped the development of the United States.
4. Explain and evaluate the role of the United States in international relations.

Creative Expression: A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

1. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring creative expression, including, but not limited to, arts, communications, creative writing, media arts, music, and theater.

2. Analyze how arts from diverse cultures of the past serve as a foundation for those of the present, and describe the significance of works of art in the societies that created them.
3. Articulate how meaning is created in the arts or communications and how experience is interpreted and conveyed.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the skills involved in the creative process.
5. Use appropriate technologies to conduct research and to communicate.

Individual and Society: A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

1. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the relationship between the individual and society, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, history, journalism, philosophy, political science, psychology, public affairs, religion, and sociology.
2. Examine how an individual's place in society affects experiences, values, or choices.
3. Articulate and assess ethical views and their underlying premises.
4. Articulate ethical uses of data and other information resources to respond to problems and questions.
5. Identify and engage with local, national, or global trends or ideologies, and analyze their impact on individual or collective decision-making.

Scientific World: A course in this area must meet at least three of the following additional learning outcomes. A student will:

1. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the scientific world, including, but not limited to: computer science, history of science, life and physical sciences, linguistics, logic, mathematics, psychology, statistics, and technology-related studies.
2. Demonstrate how tools of science, mathematics, technology, or formal analysis can be used to analyze problems and develop solutions.
3. Articulate and evaluate the empirical evidence supporting a scientific or formal theory.
4. Articulate and evaluate the impact of technologies and scientific discoveries on the contemporary world, such as issues of personal privacy, security, or ethical responsibilities.
5. Understand the scientific principles underlying matters of policy or public concern in which science plays a role.