To: Laura Keating, Chair, Hunter College Senate

From: The Joint Committee on General Education Assessment
        Prof. Lawrence Kowerski, Chair, Senate Committee on General Education Requirements
        Prof. Gina Riley, Chair, Senate Committee on Academic Assessment and Evaluation

Re: **Report and Recommendations on Assessment of Institutional Learning Outcomes and of General Education Flexible Core**
Date: May 12, 2020

During the Spring of 2019, Hunter College conducted assessments of three Institutional Learning Outcomes as part of our five-year assessment plan for General Education. A sample of courses from across the College was selected by the General Education Requirements (GER) and Academic Assessment & Evaluation (AAE) Committees. GER and AAE committees jointly developed rubrics. Departments were given the required rubrics along with information regarding the assessment process to be used. Courses were chosen from programs in the social sciences, physical sciences, humanities, and mathematics and statistics departments.

We identified the following ILOs as being associated with the required outcomes in the "Flexible Core" portion of the CUNY Common Core as they are construed in Hunter's General Education Requirement:

1) **Acquire Broad and Specialized Knowledge**: Hunter graduates will have the breadth of knowledge to make a positive difference in a complex, diverse, and changing world.
2) **Research and Communicate Effectively**: Hunter graduates will communicate with clarity, coherence, and purpose. They will access information and integrate a variety of sources to frame original arguments.
3) **Think Critically and Creatively**: As critical thinkers, Hunter graduates will evaluate different types and sources of claims using appropriate evidence, and as creative thinkers, they will use novel ideas to better understand and shape the world around them.

Acquire Broad and Specialized Knowledge
For this assessment, we understood this ILO to mean that students will complete a major for specialized knowledge and General Education for broad knowledge. Departmental assessment data should be consulted for understanding students' ability to acquire specialized knowledge. For the ability to acquire broad knowledge, a full evaluation of General Education at Hunter through the five-year assessment plan is required.

Research and Communicate Effectively:
For this assessment, we aligned "Research" with the Flexible Core Outcome to "gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view." In the rubric, we considered "Engagement with Sources," "Choice of Sources," and "Integration and Attribution of Sources." We aligned "Communicate Effectively" with the Flexible Core Outcome to "produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions." In the rubric we emphasized "Written Communication" and considered "Focus and Thesis."

For Research, a total of 66% of lower-level students and 84% of upper- level students met or exceeded expectations in this area. The Choice of Sources outcome was focused on student's choice of appropriate sources in research. In this assessment, approximately 76% of lower-level students and 84%

of upper-level students met or exceeded expectations. The final area assessed in terms of Research had to do with integration and Attribution or Sources. A total of 78% of upper- and lower-level students met or exceeded expectations in this area.

For Communicate Effectively, the sample included 10 sections from 100- and 200-level courses. Instructors were asked to randomly sample 10 students' work. In some cases, they used larger samples, which were then weighted. The total number assessed was 312 students. In the Spring of 2019, a larger sample of courses, from all levels, was included in the assessment. Four hundred fifty-eight students' work was assessed in a way that was deemed usable for inclusion in the sample. In total, 770 students were sampled. In brief, a majority of students (47% of upper-level students and 44% of lower-level students) were rated as "exceeding expectations." Full results are reported in the 2018-2019 ILO Flex Core Assessment Summary Report.

Think Critically and Creatively:
For this assessment, we divided the outcome into two parts: Critical Thinking and Creative Thinking. We aligned this ILO with the Flexible Core Outcome to "evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically."

Think Critically
In the rubric, we considered the use of "argumentation and evidence." A total of 426 students (358 lower-level students and 68 upper-level students) were assessed. Fifty-six percent of lower-level students and 66% of upper-level students combined met or exceeded expectations.

Think Creatively/Creative Thinking – Connecting, Synthesizing, and Transforming
In the rubric, we considered the ability for "Taking Risks," "Solving Problems," "Embracing Complexity," "Innovative Thinking," and "Connecting, Synthesizing, and Transforming." For this rubric, we used a modified version of the *AAC&U VALUE* rubric for Creative Thinking. While the actual rubric included five areas to be assessed, only one of those areas—Connecting, Synthesizing, and Transforming—was assessed in more than two sections; therefore, only the Connecting, Synthesizing, and Transforming data was included in the 2018-2019 ILO Flex Core Assessment Summary Report. This assessment was only done in the spring term, and included data from 141 students (127 lower-level students; 14 upper-level students). Because of the small sample size, we are less certain that our results are representative of Hunter students as a whole in comparison to the other categories assessed. In this area, 40% of students were rated as not meeting or approaching expectations after rounding error; 60% were viewed as meeting or exceeding expectations.

For all assessments, a full breakdown of data is included in the 2018-2019 ILO Flex Core Summary Report. A breakdown of ILO, Flexible Core Outcomes, and Corresponding Rubric Row is below:

Institutional Learning Outcome (ILO)	Corresponding Rubric Row
Research & Communicate Effectively	1a. Writing: Focus and thesis
	1b. Research: Engagement with Sources
	1c. Research: Choice of sources
	1d. Research: Integration and attribution of sources
Think Critically and Creatively	2a. Critical Thinking: Argumentation and evidence
	2b. Creative Thinking

Reflection and Recommendations:

In total, 10 out of 10 sections participated in the Fall, with a total sample size of 312 students. In the Spring, 16 out of 17 programs participated with a total of 458 students. From a qualitative perspective, assessments were successful. Full results and recommendations are reported in the 2018-2019 ILO Flex Core Assessment Summary Report. That report and discussions within the AAE and GER committees have yielded the following recommendations:

Main Recommendation:

- From the assessment results above, it is clear that students performed less than optimally on creative and critical thinking outcomes. Therefore, the college should focus on these two outcomes moving forward. The Assessment Director should post materials about how to effectively teach creative and critical thinking on the assessment website. The Assessment Director should also run semester-long, theme-based workshops on how to teach creative and critical thinking across disciplines. The Senate AAE and GER committee will work collaboratively to foster the use of these resources. Faculty should work at the program and departmental level to develop more effective and specific approaches to teaching creative and critical thinking in line with their disciplines.

Senate Committees and Assessment Director Recommendations:

- The Assessment Director and the Senate GER and AAE committees should communicate more effectively with assessment coordinators and departments and make sure faculty clearly understand rubric-based expectations, and the Five-Year Assessment Plan as a whole.
- Assessment workshops will be held both at the beginning of each semester and end of the academic year. These workshops will involve all instructors, assessment coordinators, and librarians who have a stake in specific rubrics to be assessed. In these workshops, there should be a clear discussion of rubrics to be used, their application, and sample sizes to be considered. Feedback from these workshops would also inform recommendations to be later presented to the Senate.

Department and Program Recommendations:

- Assessment coordinators should actively participate in existing programs and workshops offered through the Office of Assessment to initiate broad conversations at the college level about general education requirements and assessment. These conversations can produce program-specific awareness of what it means for students to exceed, meet, approach, or not meet expectations.
- Assessment coordinators should facilitate faculty conversations of how to integrate the GER assessment report into continuing department and program-level assessment discussions.
- Assessment coordinators should collaborate with librarians and disciplinary library liaisons on assessment-related discussions. The Office of Assessment will facilitate these contacts.