

General Education Five Year Assessment Plan

Prepared by The General Education Committee, Fall 2019

Introduction

In the 2017-2018 Academic Year, Great Basin College approved a redesigned General Education Program for the A.A. and A.S. degrees¹, a project prompted by the suggestions and observations of NWCCU. The redesign focused on instituting an assessable and outcome-based General Education program for transfer degrees that targeted specific courses within general education and linked them to specific educational outcomes relevant to the program. The General Education learning outcomes also underwent review and redesign in order to ensure demonstrability and adherence to national trends in general education.

This redesign of general education presented the need for a reconsideration and overhaul of assessment procedures for general education courses and the program overall. In academic year 2018-2019, the General Education Committee set about the task of developing an assessment plan for general education that reflected and accounted for the range of classes that a given general education outcome might address as well as the need for content specialty and faculty/department participation in crafting specific and use-driven assessments for general education courses.

This document details Great Basin College's General Education Assessment Plan, which reflects our commitment to ensuring student learning and success through ongoing assessment, refinement and improvement of General Education goals and processes.

Assessment Structure

When designing assessment procedures, the General Education committee wished to respect the autonomy and discipline knowledge of individual instructors/departments teaching general education courses. For this reason, the committee determined the best method of producing assessment data usable for the General Education program, as well as for classroom instructors, would allow instructors/departments to design assessments for Gen. Ed. courses that are of value to the instructor and the department but also useful for assessment at the institutional level. This resulted in a guideline focused, mediated approach to assessment.

The General Education committee developed the attached Guidelines for General Education Assessment for use by departments and instructors in planning for assessment of general education courses. The guidelines set certain parameters for assessment (i.e. assessments must focus on observable demonstrations of student learning, utilize appropriate general education outcomes, contain quantifiable data, etc. etc.) but allow individual faculty and departments to determine the precise methods of assessment within their courses. The methodology of

¹ The redesign of General Education focused on the A.A. and A.S. degrees, as A.A.S. degrees, Certifications and other programs, due to governance and accreditation of outside bodies, make use of embedded general education. Additionally, these programs and degrees are reviewed independently on the program/degree level, which made the matter of assessing the A.A. and A.S. degrees a greater concern for the institution at the time of the redesign.

assessment must be explained and interpretable by third parties outside of the discipline, such as administrators, General Education committee members, and accreditors.

The assessment plan proposed by a faculty member/department for a given course is to be submitted to the General Education Committee, which will review the methodology for clarity and usability in regards to General Education program assessment. Assessment plans for courses will be reviewed in the 5th year of the 5-year assessment cycle.

Once assessment plans are reviewed and accepted, involved departments and faculty members will gather data from their courses according to their plan and, at the time of the General Education assessment of the learning outcomes linked to the course, submit a report compiled according to the course assessment plan. This report will also be submitted to Institutional Research and the Assessment Committee.

Once all course reports for a given set of outcomes are available and compiled, the General Education Committee, in conjunction with the Assessment Committee, will review the aggregate results across courses addressing a particular outcome to compile data for an overall General Education Outcome Report, which will detail learning outcome achievement across courses and document trends in student achievement. These individual outcome reports will be produced within the first four years of the General Education Assessment cycle according to the schedule below.

In the 5th year of the cycle, the General Education Committee will produce a General Education Program Review that compiles all outcome reports, considers student performance across general education outcomes, and recommends modifications or refinements of the program to be explored and pursued in the next cycle.

The General Education Committee believes this assessment plan will not only ensure usable data for steering the General Education program, but will also reflect, inform and acknowledge faculty practices at the classroom level by providing an opportunity to construct and conduct use-driven assessments of courses.

Timing

The General Education Program Assessment will operate on a 5-year cycle:

Year 1: Communications and Expressions

Assessment of: Written Communications, Oral Communications, Evidence-Based Communications, Fine Arts.

Year 2: Logical and Scientific Reasoning

Assessment of: Mathematical Reasoning, Scientific Reasoning, Scientific Data Interpretation.

Year 3: Human Societies and Experience

Assessment of: Structure of Societies, American Constitutions and Institutions, Humanities.

Year 4: Technological Proficiency

Assessment of: Technological Proficiency.

Year 5: Program Review

Attached Support Documents: General Education Objectives, General Education Requirements (A.A. and A.S.), General Education Assessment Guidelines

General Education Assessment Guidelines

For use by instructors/departments supervising general education courses

Purpose and Philosophy

In order to effectively assess whether the General Education program at GBC is fulfilling its stated academic outcome, it is important that instructors teaching general education courses regularly assess whether students are meeting the outcomes of the program. Additionally, effective and usable assessments at the course, program and institutional levels are an essential part of accreditation and development.

The General Education Committee puts forth these assessment guidelines with the awareness that no singular assessment methodology is appropriate for all content and courses, and that assessment information is most valuable when it is of use at both the program and course level, allowing individual instructors/departments to modify courses and curriculum using accurate and relevant information. For this reason, these guidelines allow departments/instructors freedom in designing their own course assessments, with an eye toward providing clear and relevant data to be used in assessment of our General Education program.

In recent years, NWCCU has stressed two key principles regarding assessment of academic programs and courses:

1. Assessment methodologies and tools that are accurate, relevant, clear and reflective of student performance and achievement.
2. Assessments that are usable in effecting change at all levels of an institution.

The following assessment guidelines reflect these principles in order to ensure not only compliance with accreditation standards, but also to effect positive development and growth at the course, program and institutional levels.

Assessment Guidelines

The following guidelines are designed to help instructors/departments develop appropriate assessment methodologies/reporting to meet the needs of General Education Program Assessment as well as to generate data that is relevant and usable in course and program design. The guidelines are as follows:

1. *Assessment documents need to list the General Education outcome(s) being addressed in the course.* These outcomes are listed in the annual catalogue. Each course is responsible for the General Education program area/outcomes it is listed under in the grid.
2. *Assessment of outcomes needs to be based on student work that directly demonstrates achievement of outcomes.* Assignment(s) or student work used for assessment must be clearly connected to the outcomes in a way that is clear to outside parties (i.e. the Gen. Ed. Committee and Accreditors), and must demonstrate performance/achievement of

outcomes. In most, if not all, cases, overall course grades and other areas of classroom performance such as participation are not valid demonstrations of student achievement for assessment purposes.

3. *Any assessment reporting should provide a clear explanation of the assessment methodology (how performance was assessed) as well as how the work being assessed meets Gen. Ed. outcomes.* These explanations should be concise, clear and allow third parties to understand the method and validity of assessment. If assessment tools are used (such as rubrics), it should be clear to readers how rating systems and evaluation tools work (i.e. if you have a scale of 1 to 5, it should be clear what criteria are used to generate the rating).
4. *Completed assessment reporting should include data generated from assessment as well as discussion and interpretation of its meaning (i.e. observed trends, changes between assessments).*
5. *An effective assessment report should include detail on how the instructor/department will incorporate and utilize data in course design and planning moving forward.*

As an additional note, while it is not mandatory, courses with multiple instructors and sections (i.e. ENG 101, MATH 120, etc. etc.) are often best assessed at the departmental level, rather than at the course level. While this may require a certain degree of communication and collaboration between instructors, it will ensure a consistent result across courses as well as provide the department and Gen. Ed. program with a clear view of student performance.