

**General Education Assessment**  
Reimagining General Education Leadership Team  
University Curriculum Council (UCC)  
**First Reading: March 17, 2020**

Following the approval of OHIO’s reimagined general education by UCC and Faculty Senate in Spring 2020, this document provides an overview for general education assessment. Specifically, it provides recommendations for an assurance of learning process for (a) measuring student achievement of learning through assessment and (b) using assessment information as the foundation for the continuous improvement of the general education curriculum.

Paralleling OHIO’s program-level assessment structure, the framework of the proposal aligns with the recommended components of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) Transparency Framework<sup>1</sup> which includes

- (1) specification of student learning outcomes,
- (2) an assessment plan,
- (3) evidence of student learning, and
- (4) use of student learning evidence for program improvement.

### **Role of Assessment**

Gathering evidence of student achievement of learning outcomes – the knowledge, skills, and competencies students gain through their college experience – is the foundation of assuring students are achieving common goal learning outcomes.

Broadly, assessment refers to a collection of activities that measure, analyze, and evaluate student learning to gauge the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. Meaningful assessment should also be the catalyst for the continuous improvement of the underpinnings of students’ educational experiences.

OHIO’s mission statement highlights the need for assessment: “Ohio University holds as its central purpose the intellectual and personal development of its students.” Assessment is one tool that enables OHIO faculty and staff to achieve this mission.

### **Alignment with HLC**

OHIO’s is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The Higher Learning Commission expects institutions to successfully achieve several criteria for offering high-quality educational programs. With respect to the general education curriculum and assessment, two key criteria are:

*Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support*

3.B. The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills integral to its educational programs.

*Criterion 4: Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement*

4.B: The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

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<sup>1</sup> The NILOA Transparency Framework is used by the Office Institutional Research for collecting and sharing program-level assessment data through OHIO’s [Assessment Clearinghouse](#).

## Assurance of Learning Process

The following outlines the assurance of learning process for OHIO's general education.

### Managing Assurance of Learning

The UCC General Education Committee will periodically form four-person task forces dedicated to the assurance of learning process of one specific learning goal. Task forces will be formed on a rotating schedule so that assurance of learning process is completed for each common goal. Each four-person task force must include at least three full-time faculty members.

Broadly, the role of each task force will be to coordinate the collection of evidence of student learning from faculty, to aggregate and report evidence of student learning, and to offer recommendations for continuous improvement using evidence of student learning. Specifically, each task force will be responsible for:

- Assisting with recruiting faculty (or staff, as appropriate) to participate in the assessment process as assessors;
- Helping to train faculty and staff to use the common goal rubric to assess artifacts of student work;
- Collecting evidence of student learning and assessment of student learning data from assessors;
- Analyzing and reporting results to the UCC General Education Committee; and
- Creating and sharing recommendations for continuous improvement to the UCC General Education Committee.

#### Step 1: Collecting Evidence of Student Learning

Evidence of student learning will be collected by faculty (or staff, as appropriate) from course-embedded or activity-embedded student learning opportunities. Meaningful evidence of student learning should allow for the demonstration and evaluation of students' knowledge, skills, and abilities for each of the learning outcomes using work naturally produced from coursework or other learning activities.

Evidence of student learning may vary. As examples, evidence of student learning could be demonstrated through homework assignments, case study reports, essays, simulations, performances, exam questions, etc. Regardless of the evidence of student learning identified, the evaluation of student learning should be a *direct* and *repeatable* assessment such that it:

- Assesses student learning of knowledge, skills, or attitudes;
- Assesses learning for each learning outcome associated with the common goal;
- Assesses individual performance;
- Uses a qualified person as the assessor; and
- Is designed to be repeated in the same course (or similar course) with different students in two years.

#### Step 2: Assessing Evidence of Student Learning

Evidence of student learning may be evaluated (assessed) by the faculty teaching the courses or by staff who are offering the learning opportunity from which the evidence of student learning is sampled. Faculty or staff who offer learning opportunities from which evidence of student learning is drawn are referred to as *teachers*. Faculty or staff who evaluate student work as evidence of student achievement of learning are referred to as *assessors*. As necessary for validation and norming, evidence of student learning may also be assessed by other faculty or staff.

The UCC General Education Committee and the task force will be jointly responsible for recruiting *teachers* willing to volunteer<sup>2</sup> to serve as *assessors* for a specific common goal. The benefit of allowing *teachers* to serve as *assessors* allows assessors to understand the content and context from which the student work is produced (e.g., a chemistry teacher assessing critical thinking using a lab report produced within a chemistry class). However, as the system matures, evidence of student learning should be assessed by others.

The UCC General Education Committee and the task force will also be jointly responsible for creating and sharing guidelines to collect and assess meaningful, authentic evidence of student learning. As appropriate, task force committee members will be eligible to serve as an assessor.

Individual assessors will sample student work naturally produced from his / her course (or co-curricular learning activity) and will be responsible for:

- Evaluating evidence of student learning from at least 25 unique undergraduate students;
- Submitting evaluations of each learning outcome for each student; and
- Submitting student PID information matched to individual evaluations.

Combined, the total minimum number of unique students to be assessed per common goal across all assessors should be 200. Assessors will be provided a small stipend after submitting samples of student work and full assessment data.

*Note:* Because individual faculty, courses, or other learning opportunities are not responsible for student achievement of learning across the general education program, the use of assessment data as evidence of assessor performance is strictly prohibited. However, at his or her discretion, assessors are permitted to use aggregate assessment results from his or her course to showcase meaningful, authentic student learning opportunities and to highlight student achievement of learning within the context of the specific learning opportunity.

### Step 3: Reporting Evidence of Student Learning

The task force should provide a report to the UCC General Education Committee that includes both aggregate assessment results and recommendations.

- Assessment results should be reported only in the aggregate and by demographic groups to determine student achievement of learning outcomes and to identify gaps in achievement. Student PID information should only be used to establish demographic characteristics of the sample and to determine potential discrepancies among student demographic groups. The identification of individual assessors and individual students should remain strictly confidential.
- Depending on the results, recommendations for continuous improvement may include any variety of recommendations ranging from incremental, course-level improvements such as adding learning modules or activities to improve student achievement of a specific learning outcome and/or long-term program-level improvements such as modifying program requirements.

The UCC General Education committee should share reports widely across the university. Specifically, reports should be shared with the Office of the Provost, the Office of Institutional Research, the University Curriculum Council, Faculty Senate, University College, and the Chairs & Directors Council.

Most importantly, reports must be shared directly and explicitly with department chairs and school directors who have courses included as part of the learning outcome.

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<sup>2</sup> Because using volunteers to sample and assess student work has generalizability limitations due to the nature of convenience sampling, efforts should be made to ensure that evidence of student learning and assessors represent a wide variety of learning opportunities and disciplines.

#### Step 4: Using Evidence of Student Learning for Continuous Improvement

After reports have been shared, the process of continuous improvement should begin. Continuous improvement refers to the implementation of incremental (course-level) changes or long-term (program-level) changes. The goal is to provide meaningful, authentic learning opportunities to develop students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes and to address deficiencies in the achievement of learning outcomes.

Improvements may be articulated as continuing to offer existing student learning opportunities or to start offering additional learning opportunities. For example, if the results of the critical thinking assessment suggest that students *are* demonstrating the ability “to use information from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis” (i.e., learning outcome #2: use of evidence), then continuous improvement should ensure that existing learning opportunities are continued. However, on the one hand, if the results of the critical thinking assessment suggest that students *are not* adequately demonstrating the ability to use evidence, additional learning opportunities should be offered to address the gap between expectations and achievement.

Although assessment data will only be sampled from select learning opportunities, all learning opportunities associated with the common goal will be expected to contribute to continuous improvement.

Accordingly, the use of student learning for continuous improvement will be managed by the UCC General Education Committee, who will be responsible for:

- Collecting and documenting course-specific continuous improvements;
- Implementing long-term, program-level curricular changes if necessary; and
- Reporting continuous improvements to relevant stakeholders (e.g., Office of the Provost, Office of Institutional Research, UCC, Faculty Senate, University College, and Chairs & Directors Council).

#### Scheduling Assurance of Learning

Given the complexity and time commitment required for the assurance of learning of the eight common goals, a rotating and staggered assurance of learning is recommended. A proposed assessment schedule is provided in **Table 1**.

Table 1: General Education Assessment Schedule

|                               | F1 | S1 | F2 | S2 | F3 | S3 | F4 | S4 | F5 | S5 | F6 | S6 | F7 | S7 |
|-------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| <b>Common Goal</b>            |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Quantitative Reasoning        | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M3 | R3 |
| Written Communication         | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M3 | R3 |
| Oral Communication            | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M3 | R3 |
| Integrative Learning          |    |    | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI | CI | CI |
| Critical Thinking             |    |    | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI | CI | CI |
| Teamwork                      |    |    |    |    | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI |
| Intercultural                 |    |    |    |    | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI |
| Ethical Reasoning             |    |    |    |    | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI |
| <b>Knowledge Goal</b>         |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
| Arts and Humanities           | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M3 | R3 |
| Natural Science               |    |    | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI | CI | CI |
| Social and Behavioral Science |    |    |    |    | M1 | R1 | CI | CI | CI | CI | M2 | R2 | CI | CI |

*Table Notes:*

- F refers to the fall semester; S refers to the spring semester.
- M refers to measurement; R refers to a report.
- CI refers to continuous improvement.

For each goal, the first measure of evidence of student learning would be collected, evaluated, and reported to the task force by the end of the fall semester. During the following spring semester, the task force will aggregate, evaluate, and report assessment data and recommendations for continuous improvement to the UCC General Education Committee.

The UCC General Education Committee will be responsible for sharing reports with appropriate stakeholders. Continuous improvements are expected to be developed, implemented, and reported during the following four semesters.<sup>3</sup>

After the continuous improvement phase, the second measure of evidence of student learning will begin. The second measure of evidence of student learning would be collected in the fall semester; the second report would be shared during the spring semester immediately following the second measurement.

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<sup>3</sup> Failure to participate fully in continuous improvements may result in learning opportunities (e.g., courses or programs) being excluded from inclusion in the general education program.