GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT PLAN

State University of New York College at Cortland

2022

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SUNY CORTLAND GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT PLAN

Introduction

The goal of General Education (GE) Assessment at SUNY Cortland is to better understand student achievement in the specific areas, examine effectiveness of the program as a whole, and engage the campus community in dialogue about the purpose and outcomes of General Education. This plan looks to assess the entire program and categories and not focus on individual courses, departments or

instructors. Building upon the previous three cycles of General Education Assessment (beginning in 2002), the General Education Assessment Plan for SUNY Cortland is based upon the following:

1. Establishing a timeframe and flexible structure for on-going GE assessment.
2. Supporting clarification and communication of GE learning outcomes.
3. Supporting the use of faculty chosen embedded assessment methods.
4. Combining GE category assessments with institutional indicators from survey assessments, such as the Student Satisfaction Survey (formerly Student Opinion Survey), National Survey of Student Engagement, and Faculty Survey of Student Engagement.

The plan follows a four-year assessment cycle, outlines assessment methods, clarifies roles, and makes recommendations for increasing the use of assessment data for on-going understanding and development of the General Education program. The goal is to support authentic and meaningful assessment in the most efficient methods possible while maintaining integrity throughout the process. A review of current trends in General Education, including the Association of American Colleges and Universities *Value: Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education,* helped inform this work.

The SUNY Cortland General Education Program

The General Education program at SUNY Cortland reflects a merger of the college's longstanding general education learning outcomes with the 2000 SUNY General Education program required system wide. There are 12 categories fulfilled through coursework reviewed by the General Education Committee. A complete GE course roster is available online showing all approved coursework by category. The GE program also includes three infused competency categories and outcomes are achieved by completion of the program as a whole: Writing Intensive, Information Management, and Critical Thinking. Learning outcomes for each category and competency area are listed in Appendix 1.

Responsibility for General Education Assessment

The GE Committee, a standing committee of the Faculty Senate, has primary responsibility for GE assessment including communication with faculty, review of materials, and coordination of various working committees across all of the categories. The Institutional Research and Analysis (IRA) Office has primary responsibility to support the implementation of GE assessment with additional support from

the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness, Dean of Arts and Sciences, and Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The GE Committee reviews, endorses and approves the GE assessment procedures for the College to assure best practices exist. The Committee meets bi-weekly and relies on the administrative structure and responsibilities of IRA in coordinating assessment-related tasks of the Committee. Such tasks include, but are not restricted to sampling procedures, implementation of assessment procedures, analysis of results, and assessment reporting. IRA conducts GE assessment tasks with the approval and support of the GE Committee. The success and viability of the GE Assessment Plan at SUNY Cortland is dependent on the cooperation and coordination between the entire College faculty, GE Committee, and Institutional Research and Analysis.

All faculty teaching General Education have responsibility for participation in General Education assessment and support of the learning outcomes by:

1. Ensuring that course syllabi include the specific course category and learning outcomes for the GE category of the course
2. Participating in assessment activities as relevant to the category assessments
3. Participating in review of assessment results and discussions on implications for category

Assessment Process and Procedures

In following the current discussions on General Education outcomes and assessment, we have looked to support multiple methods to add dimension to our assessment process (Leskes and Wright, 2005).

Timetable

The GE categories will be assessed on a four-year cycle as outlined in Appendix 4. This schedule allows for ongoing assessment and disburses the work of assessing 15 areas across a manageable timeframe for all involved with the work. Given that it takes a year from the start of assessment of a category to the review of results, this will allow time for implantation of changes before the category is assessed again. Appendix 3 outlines a sample timeline for the annual GE assessment cycle.

Course Samples

IRA selects the sample of class sections to be assessed based on the Spring class schedule. A modified stratified random sample is selected to ensure that the classes are representative of the population of students enrolled in each GE category being assessed. The goal is to assess approximately one-third of the students enrolled in each GE category. Specifically, for GE categories with classes offered by multiple schools and/or departments, 33% of the class sections within each school and/or department are selected for assessment. One modification to this sampling procedure is to avoid, if possible, asking any individual faculty member to conduct GE assessment in more than one section per year.

Administration of Assessments

All faculty selected (including part-time adjuncts) will be required to participate in GE assessment. Since most of the assessment methods will be chosen by individual instructors and course-embedded, they will be integral to course requirements. A major advantage of embedded assessment is that students give their best effort when assessments are integrated within the course and graded.

Rubric Review

The student learning outcomes and associated assessment rubrics of each selected GE category will be reviewed by the GE Committee. As appropriate, the GE Committee may form rubric subcommittees, made up of one or two committee members, along with faculty representatives from the departments that teach courses in the GE category. The primary task of the rubric subcommittee is to develop, review, and revise the category assessment rubric. In the process of that review, if a subcommittee also determines that the student learning outcomes (SLOs) need revision, they may also make such recommendations to the GE Committee. However, any such SLO revisions would not be implemented until after the assessment cycle is completed.

Syllabi Review

Selected course syllabi will be collected and reviewed by the GE Committee, via the members assigned to rubric subcommittees. The syllabi review should ensure that syllabi reflect the GE category, student learning outcomes, minimum writing requirements, and clarity of connection between the course content and category outcomes. This process allows multiple sections to "use the same outcomes and

rubrics, thereby guaranteeing consistency without the use of cookie-cutter syllabi or methods" (Gerretson and Golson, 2005, p.139).

Assessment Options

Depending upon the GE category, there will be different options for assessment driven by faculty interest and expertise in the related areas. The options for assessment include:

1. Standing committees or ad hoc groups create common assessment to be administered and reviewed across all sections. Examples of this include the Writing Committee's oversight of GE category 10a (Basic Communication: Writing Studies).
2. In-class embedded assessment where faculty choose assignment(s) that reflect student understanding for each of the GE SLOs. The instructor submits an Assessment Methods Form, describing their assignment(s) and assessment instrument(s) for each SLO.

IRA will coordinate the collection of faculty assessment methods and assessment results for all students in the class sections selected for assessment.

Aggregation and Documentation of Findings

IRA will process the assessment data submitted by faculty, analyze and aggregate the data, and report the results to constituents as appropriate. At all stages of dissemination, data will be treated in aggregate form and confidentiality of students, faculty members, and courses will be maintained. Institutional Research and Analysis will maintain historical records of the assessment process and all data.

Institutional Survey Measures Related to General Education

The GE Committee will review the findings from three major survey instruments to augment the GE course assessments. While these are based on student (and faculty) self-reported data, they give an added dimension to the in-class assessments conducted by faculty, as well as providing national and peer institution benchmarks. All three surveys are conducted once every three years. Two are national surveys, and the third is a SUNY system-wide survey:

1. Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS); formerly the Student Opinion Survey (SOS)
2. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
3. Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)

Appendix 4 shows the related questions to be reviewed for the SSS, NSSE, and FSSE.

Results, Review, Recommendations: Closing the Loop

A major focus of the assessment effort is to provide findings for categories in a timely manner and to foster dialogue on each GE category as well as the entire GE requirements. The committee and IRA look to make the information more engaging in multiple ways:

1. Merge assessment data with other institutional data sources (e.g., student race/ethnicity, class level, major, etc.) to enable more informative analyses of the assessment results;
2. Share summary assessment results with the entire campus, by posting on the Institutional Research and Analysis webpage, with email notification;
3. Hold open campus meeting(s) on assessment findings;
4. Integrate other related data sources (e.g., survey data, grade distributions) with assessment results;
5. Consolidate all feedback to look for possible changes and to inform individual faculty reflection and course development and revision.

In addition, we will look to identify peer institutions and further research best practices in General Education assessment to inform our work.

Appendix 1

General Education Student Learning Outcomes

GE 1. Quantitative Skills

Students will demonstrate the ability: 1.) to interpret and draw inferences from mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables and schematics; 2.) to represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally; 3.) to employ quantitative methods, such as arithmetic, algebra, geometry or statistics, to solve problems; 4.) to estimate and check mathematical results for reasonableness; 5.) to recognize the limits of mathematical and statistical methods.

GE 2. Natural Science

Students will demonstrate: 1.) an understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis; 2.) knowledge of the principles of one or more of the natural sciences; 3.) the ability to apply scientific data, concepts and models in one or more of the natural sciences, and relate the relevant technology and principles they have studied to modern life.

GE 3. Social Sciences

Students will demonstrate: 1.) an understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis; 2.) knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.

GE 4. United States History and Society

Students will demonstrate: 1.) knowledge of a basic narrative of American history such as: political, economic, social and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society; 2.) an understanding of state and mediating institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups, including ethnic minorities and women; 3.) an understanding of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

GE 5. Western Civilization

Students will be able to: 1.) describe within an historical context major Western political, geopolitical, economic, social, and/or intellectual developments; 2.) analyze the relationship between the development of ideas and historical change in Western and other regions of the world; 3.) discuss distinctive features of contemporary Western civilization in terms of such areas as history, institutions, economy, society and culture.

GE 6. Contrasting Cultures

Students will be able to: 1.) demonstrate an understanding of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc. of one non-western civilization; 2.) compare and/or contrast another contemporary culture or other contemporary cultures with the dominant themes of U.S. culture; 3.) demonstrate an understanding of cultural differences in world views, traditions, cultural institutions, values, social systems, languages and means of communication.

GE 7. The Humanities

Students will: 1.) be able to critically respond to works in the humanities; 2.) be able to discuss major human concerns as they are treated in the humanities; 3.) demonstrate an understanding of the conventions and methods of at least one area in the humanities.

Appendix 1 (cont.)

General Education Student Learning Outcomes

GE 8. The Arts
Students will demonstrate an understanding of: 1.) at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein; 2.) the significance of artistic expression in past and/or present civilizations.

GE 9. Foreign Language Requirement?
Students will demonstrate: 1.) basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language; 2.) an understanding of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language they are studying.

GE 10 Basic Communication:
Students will: 1.) be able to produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms; 2.) demonstrate the ability to revise and improve their written texts; 3.) demonstrate the ability to research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details; 4.) develop proficiency in oral discourse; 5.) demonstrate the ability to evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.

GE 11. Prejudice and Discrimination
Students will demonstrate an understanding of: 1.) how power, bias, prejudice and discrimination can affect society's values, attitudes and institutions; 2.) approaches that address barriers and foster greater equity and inclusivity.

GE 12 Science, Technology, Values and Society
Students will demonstrate an understanding of: 1.) the manner in which value judgments are justified and how interpretation of technical information can lead to different conclusions, and; 2.) issues at the interface of science, technology and society and how the methods of science and scientific data are understood in the context of social issues.

GE Competency: Writing Intensive
Students will: 1) undertake an effective writing process, making informed decisions about their writing with input from their instructor; 2) write effectively in specific disciplinary genres.

GE Competency: Information Management
Students will: 1) be able to understand, use, and reflect on research techniques in order to locate information; 2) be able to evaluate information, in order to select the best resources for their information needs; 3) synthesize information in order to responsibly create content.

GE Competency: Critical Thinking
Students will: 1. identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others' work; and 2. develop well-reasoned arguments.

	General Education Assessment Cycle									
GE Category	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Fall 2024	Spring 2025	Fall 2025	Spring 2026	Fall 2026	Spring 2027
1. Quantitative Skills							Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR	
2. Natural Sciences					Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR			
3. Social Sciences			Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR					
4. United States History and Society							Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR	
5. Western Civilization			Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR					
6. Contrasting Cultures					Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR			
7. Humanities			Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR					
8. The Arts	RRR								Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment
9. Foreign Language	RRR								Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment
10 a. Basic Communication: Writing Studies					Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment				
10 b. Basic Communication: Presentation Skills	RRR								Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment
11. Prejudice and Discrimination	RRR								Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment
12. Science, Technology, Values and Society					Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR			
WI: Writing Intensive							Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR	
IM: Information Management							Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR	
Critical Thinking							Rubric/ Syllabus Review	Assess-ment	RRR	

Fall Semesters Syllabi review will begin in Fall semester for courses randomly selected for review in upcoming Spring.
RRR (Results, review, recommendations) meetings will take place for the categories assessed the prior Spring semester.
Spring Semesters March: Review of embedded assessment methods; **April-May**: Assessment conducted; **May-August**: Assessment scores submitted to IRA; **September**: Assessment results processed by IRA.

Appendix 3

GE ASSESSMENT ANNUAL TIMELINE (sample)

Action	**Projected Date**	**Staff Involved**
Form GE category subcommittees to review assessment rubrics/ student learning outcomes	9/ 8	GE Committee
Notify departments/ faculty via email of GE categories due for assessment (copy chairs, deans, provost)	9/15	GE Committee Chair
Notify campus via Curriculum newsletter of GE categories due for assessment	September	Curriculum Coordinator
Share prior year assessment results with GE Committee; seek volunteers, feedback, ideas to communicate results to campus	9/22	Director IRA (DIRA), GE Committee
Recruit faculty representatives for subcommittees, via email to select department chairs, to review assessment rubrics/ student learning outcomes	9/29	GE Committee Chair, Vice Provost
Share prior year assessment results with campus: post results to IRA webpage; email department chairs; host discussion meetings as needed;	October	GE Committee, DIRA, Vice Provost
Initiate GE subcommittee meetings w/faculty reps to review assessment rubrics/ SLOs	October	Subcommittees
Conduct random sample selection of class sections for assessment, after Spring class schedule is set	10/13	DIRA
Share list of classes selected for assessment with GE Committee	10/20	DIRA, GE Committee
Notify faculty selected for assessment via email (copy chairs, deans, provost); request syllabi and assessment methods (attach Assessment Methods form)	10/27	GE Committee Chair, DIRA, Vice Provost, IRA Secretary
Initial deadline for faculty to submit syllabi & Assessment Method Forms	11/17	IRA Secretary
Review/ approval of SLO assessment rubrics from subcommittees	12/ 1	GE Committee, Subcommittees
Conduct final adjusted selection of classes for assessment (as needed); email any additional faculty selected to request syllabi/ assessment methods	12/ 8	DIRA, IRA Secretary
Remind faculty with missing syllabi/ assessment method forms via email	1/19	GE Committee Chair, IRA Secretary
Finish review of syllabi/ assessment methods by GE subcommittees; email faculty with f/up as needed	1/26	GE Committee, IRA Secretary
Send Assessment Instrument Results templates to selected faculty with directions via email	2/23	IRA Secretary, DIRA
Deadline for faculty to submit completed student assessment score templates	5/18	IRA Secretary, DIRA
Follow-up on late faculty submissions	June-August	IRA Secretary, DIRA
Produce summary & data analysis of assessment results	August-September	DIRA

Appendix 4

General Education Related Items from Student and Faculty Surveys

Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) (formerly Student Opinion Survey/SOS)

77. Understanding and appreciating ethnic/cultural diversity and other individual differences *[GE 11: Prejudice and Discrimination]*
79. Writing clearly and effectively *[GE 10a: Basic Communication-Writing Studies; WI: Writing Intensive]*
80. Speaking clearly and effectively *[GE 10b: Basic Communication-Presentation Skills]*
81. Using computer and information technology effectively *[Information Management]*
85. Expanding your global awareness *[GE 6: Contrasting Cultures]*
86. Understanding and appreciating political, social, and historical issues *[GE 3: Social Science; GE 4: US History and Society; GE 5: Western Civilization]*

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

4. During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following?
   b. Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations *[GE 12: Science, Technology, Values and Society]*
   e. Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information *[Information Management]*

7. During the current school year, about how many papers, reports, or other writing tasks of the following lengths have you been assigned? (Include those not yet completed.) *[Writing Intensive]*
   a. Up to 5 pages b. Between 6 and 10 pages c. 11 pages or more

17. How much has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?
   a. Writing clearly and effectively *[GE 10a: Basic Communication-Writing Studies; WI: Writing Intensive]*
   b. Speaking clearly and effectively *[GE 10b: Basic Communication-Presentation Skills]*
   c. Thinking critically and analytically *[Critical Thinking]*
   d. Analyzing numerical and statistical information *[GE 1: Quantitative Skills]*
   h. Understanding people of other backgrounds *[GE 6: Contrasting Cultures]*
   i. Solving complex real-world problems *[GE 12: Science, Technology, Values and Society]*

Appendix 4 (cont.)

General Education Related Items from Student and Faculty Surveys

Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)

29. In your selected course section, how much does the coursework emphasize the following?

b. Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations *[GE 12: Science, Technology, Values and Society]*

e. Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information *[Information Management]*

30. About how many papers, reports, or other writing tasks of the following lengths do you assign? *[Writing Intensive]*

a. Up to 5 pages b. From 6 to 10 pages c. 11 pages or more

31. To what extent do you structure your selected course sections so that students learn and develop in the following areas?

a. Writing clearly and effectively *[GE 10a: Basic Communication-Writing Studies; WI: Writing Intensive]*

b. Speaking clearly and effectively *[GE 10b: Basic Communication-Presentation Skills]*

c. Thinking critically and analytically *[Critical Thinking]*

d. Analyzing numerical and statistical information *[GE 1: Quantitative Skills]*

h. Understanding people of other backgrounds *[GE 6: Contrasting Cultures]*

i. Solving complex real-world problems *[GE 12: Science, Technology, Values and Society]*

Reference List and Additional Resources

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