

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.

2020 NWCCU Accreditation Report

For the coming NWCCU accreditation, the General Education Committee seeks clear assessment data and plans for General Education courses, with an understanding that the recent redesign of General Education and assessment implementation for the program will not allow for data gathering in all cases. Any pilot data would be greatly appreciated, as would clear plans for General Education assessments moving forward.