



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA GENERAL EDUCATION & ASSESSMENT

GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

UNO faculty have adopted the university general education curriculum to ensure that each UNO graduate possesses certain academic skills, including an appreciation for the complexity of our world, its people, and its natural environment that is essential to navigate the demands of the 21st century successfully and responsibly. The general education curriculum strives to provide students with an intellectual foundation to think clearly about complex problems, to apply knowledge and skills in new settings, and to do so with a strong sense of ethics and integrity.

Students are required to take 15 credit hours of coursework meeting fundamental academic skills requirements (composition, oral communication, math), and between 25-31 credits representing a breadth of courses in social science (~9 credits), natural science (~7 credits) and humanities (~9 credits). For a list of approved courses go to: <http://www.unomaha.edu/general-education/approved-courses/index.php>

Contacts: Matt Tracy, 402-554-2184, mtracy@unomaha.edu

GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT FAQs

Why is there a requirement to do general education assessment?

There are many valuable reasons to undertake assessment efforts that help our students and our institution. First, assessment can provide important feedback to faculty that can inform teaching practices and drive improvements to the broader general education curriculum. Second, assessment supports, highlights, and celebrates ongoing and creative efforts of our faculty which can be shared across the campus to improve student learning and outcomes. Third, assessment can bring together faculty from a variety of disciplines using a common language to discuss the general education program. Fourth, assessment will address demands for accountability and transparency from a variety of groups including parents, legislators, and accrediting bodies.

What is the difference between grades and assessment?

Assessment should evaluate student proficiency in meeting well-defined student learning outcomes, while grades often include other behaviors and/or activities such as participation, improvement, etc. and are not focused exclusively on specific learning outcomes. Assessment *can* relate to course grades in that multiple assessments can be assembled to assign a grade.

How is general education assessment in my unit different than “End of Program SLO Assessment”?

End of program SLO assessment is an ongoing process in units to measure student learning at the degree level (eg. how well graduates are meeting program outcomes in a particular academic major). Course level assessment measures incremental skills that are aligned with, but typically more narrow than program outcomes. General education assessment in your units takes place at the course level and should address how well students in your specific course, or courses, perform in meeting the existing general education student learning outcomes.

What happens to the information we provide the Gen Ed Committee?

The Gen Ed Committee will review your reports and provide feedback to your unit in the fall. The committee will also aggregate data from different units, review alignment of courses with student learning outcomes, and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the general education program in meeting its stated goals and provide this feedback to the University Assessment Committee. It's important to remember that assessment does not need to be perfect...in fact it will probably be a little (or a lot) ugly the first time. Focus on small manageable steps to improve your gen ed courses and your assessment process, and begin dialogue with your units about your gen ed courses and their contribution to the broader program.

Steps to Gen Ed Assessment

1. Review the General Education Assessment Guide

- This can be found on the web at <http://www.unomaha.edu/general-education/docs/gen-ed-assessment-guide-2016.pdf>

2. Review the course syllabus in CCMS

- This can have important information on assessment that was included when the course was proposed for inclusion in the gen ed curriculum.

3. Understand which student learning outcomes you need to assess

- Courses should assess **ALL** student learning objectives for a particular distribution area. There are four natural science SLOs:
 - demonstrate a broad understanding of the fundamental laws and principles of science and interrelationships among science and technology disciplines;
 - demonstrate a broad understanding of various natural and/or physical phenomena that surround and influence our lives;
 - describe how scientists approach and solve problems including an understanding of the basic components and limitations of the scientific method; and
 - solve problems and draw conclusions based on scientific information and models, using critical thinking and qualitative and quantitative analysis of data and concepts in particular to distinguish reality from speculation.

4. Determine which course sections you need to assess and how often

- While not every section of each course will necessarily be involved in the sampling, the data gathered should be a reasonable representation of all sections, students, and faculty. The frequency of data collection and analysis is determined by the faculty, but at a minimum, annual data collection is highly recommended regardless of the timing of the assessment cycle. Data do not need to be collected on every student, but should be collected on enough students that analyses yield useful results.

5. Determine whether or not to centralize this process across sections and instructors

- Regardless of your unit's decision, only submit one assessment report per course to the Gen Ed Committee. It is recommended, though not required, that units exercise some degree of centralization in the process to ensure consistent communication, expectations, and guidance.

6. Identify which course concepts are related to the 4 general education SLOs

- Again, it might be helpful to review the course syllabus in CCMS which likely includes some of this information.

7. Determine how you are already measuring student performance/achievement related to these concepts and whether this is sufficient for assessment of student learning outcomes

- Existing measures might include specific test questions, components of lab exercises, presentations, etc.
- Create new assessments if needed

8. Determine proficiency definitions and scoring criteria for each of your assessment measures

- These should be clearly articulated and consistently applied. This is particularly important for courses that have multiple sections with different instructors.

9. Administer the assessment tool(s) (eg. exam questions, lab, etc) as appropriate for each SLO and record results

- Instructors should administer the assessment tool, and data should be compiled and reported using the format specified in the Gen Ed Assessment Guide and existing report template: <http://www.unomaha.edu/general-education/assessment/index.php>

10. Review and discuss the data as a unit to determine what action can be taken to improve student learning

- Consider exploring differences in the abilities of students to meet the various general education student learning outcomes (eg. 90% of students sampled met/exceeded proficiency score for SLO #1, but only 25% of students met/exceeded proficiency score for SLO #4). Consider evaluating student performance relative to SLOs across different delivery methods (eg. inclass, online, day/night, etc.). Also consider including information on the process within the unit for reviewing and sharing assessment results with faculty.