

**General Education Assessment Planning Committee  
Fall 2014 Report**



Prepared by the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Program Review, University of Toledo.

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## **Purpose of General Education at UT**

The University of Toledo's General Education curriculum is a foundation for undergraduate education. It exposes the student to a range of disciplines that gives breadth to the learning experience, prepares students for their degree programs, and develops students as life-long learners who will thrive in, and contribute significantly to a constantly changing global community.

The General Education curriculum gives students critical reasoning skills to explore complex questions, grasp the essence of social, scientific and ethical problems, and arrive at nuanced opinions. It hones their ability to communicate orally and in writing. It allows them to recognize their place in history and culture, and to appreciate their connection to others in a multicultural world. It prepares them to be thoughtful, engaged citizens in participatory democracy. It requires them to explore the whole range of the liberal arts, both for the intrinsic value of doing so, and also in preparation for study in their degree programs. Specifically, they gain insights into the social and behavioral sciences, become familiar with the history, aesthetics, and criticism of the fine arts, gain experience in the scientific method through laboratory work, and use philosophical and mathematical processes to examine theoretical and natural phenomena.

### **General Education Assessment Committee Membership\***

Anthony Edgington  
Associate Professor  
English

David Krantz  
Associate Professor  
Environmental Sciences

Mary Ellen Edwards  
Professor  
Foundations of Education

Alana Malik  
University Assessment Director  
Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and  
Program Review

Mary Humphrys  
Associate Professor  
Business

Scott Molitor  
Interim Associate Dean  
Engineering

Kristen Keith  
Associate Professor  
Economics

Linda Rouillard  
Associate Professor  
French

\*membership as of August 2014

## Organization of General Education Assessment Reporting at UT

The Faculty Senate, in collaboration with the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Program Review design and implement the structure of the general education assessment reporting process. The General Education Assessment Planning Committee is made up of faculty members from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and Faculty Senate Core Curriculum Committee, and the University Assessment Director. At the request of the chair of the Faculty Senate Core Curriculum Committee, departments responsible for teaching general education courses complete a general education assessment report for each course taught within their department. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Program Review collects and analyzes the data and writes the annual general education assessment report. This report is reviewed and approved by the General Education Assessment Planning Committee, and shared with the Faculty Senate, University Assessment Committee and Office of the Provost.

### 2013-2014 General Education Assessment Activities

September 13	Mike Dowd emailed John Barrett to inform the Provost's office of the Faculty Senate appointments to the general education assessment planning committee.
October 8-9	Alana Malik attended HLC workshop- Making a Difference in Student Learning - Assessment as a Core Strategy
October 17	Committee met to define its goals and proposed timeline; discuss support from the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Program Review; and determine current general education assessment practices already taking place in the departments responsible for general education courses.
October 27-29	Alana Malik attended IUPUI Assessment Institute
October 30	Committee met to review current assessment practices already taking place, develops potential framework for documentation, discuss Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and expectations for participation from the state of Ohio.
November	Alana Malik met with various department chairs to review the report template
November 12-14	Blackboard Outcomes Pilot Training for Composition and Art History
November 20	Committee met to discuss Blackboard Outcomes tool, sending a group to Higher Learning Commission Assessment Workshop in February, CLA
December	Committee finalized report template and identified general education courses taught in Spring 2014

January 15	Scott Molitor, Co-Chair of the Faculty Senate Committee on the Core Curriculum, emailed department chairs with instructions and the template for participation in the Spring 2014 general education assessment data collection process
February 26-28	Faculty members from the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, David Krantz-Environmental Sciences, Claire Cohen-Chemistry, Jillian Bornack-Astronomy and Physics, Brenda Ledy-Biology, and Alana Malik, University Assessment Director attended the Higher Learning Commission Assessment Workshop.
March 21	Committee met to review insights from the HLC Assessment Workshop, framework for schedule
June 30	Spring 2014 general education reports were due to the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Program Review
July-August	Alana Malik followed up with individual department chairs regarding submissions
August 14	Committee met to review report template revisions for 2014-2015 reporting cycle
August	English Department Composition courses successfully completed Blackboard Outcomes pilot
September	Fall 2014 CLA administration with 5 sections of Composition I class completed
September 28	Mary Humphrys, Co-Chair of the Faculty Senate Committee on the Core Curriculum, emailed department chairs with instructions and the template for participation in the 2014-2015 general education assessment data collection process

### **Course Assessment Report Results Summary**

A total of 165 courses were included in the initial list of general education courses to be assessed for the spring of 2014. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Program Review received reports for a total of 103 courses. During the data collection process, several departments contacted the Core Curriculum Committee Co-Chairs to request that their course be removed from the general education curriculum. Several courses were also cross-listed between multiple departments, and only the department teaching the course submitted a report. Some departments that did not report data for spring 2014 outlined assessment plans for the following academic year. Chris Roseman, the Faculty Assessment Representative, and Alana Malik, University Assessment Director, have been charged with following up with individual departments to assist them in developing their plans to assess their general education courses for the 2014-2015 academic year.

### *Source of the Student Learning Outcomes*

The Spring 2014 report template requested faculty to define the source of their student learning outcomes. The majority of reports referred to the general education outcomes as outlined by the Faculty Senate. The definition of the general education outcomes are:

- *Communication*: UT students must demonstrate abilities to communicate meaningfully, persuasively, and creatively with different audiences through written, oral, numeric, graphic and visual modes.
- *Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning and Literacy*: UT students must demonstrate the capacity to apply mathematical reasoning and scientific inquiry to diverse problems.
- *Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility*: UT students must demonstrate understanding of and critical engagement in ethical, cultural, and political discourse and capacity to work productively as a community member committed to the value of diversity, difference, and the imperatives of justice.
- *Information Literacy*: UT students must demonstrate the ability to find, organize, critically assess, and effectively use information to engage in advanced work in a challenging field of study. Students should demonstrate responsible, legal, creative, and ethical use of information.
- *Critical Thinking and Integrative Learning*: UT students must be able to integrate reasoning, questioning, and analysis across traditional boundaries of viewpoint, practice, and discipline.

Thirty-three courses provided a different source for their student learning outcomes. Other responses to the source of the student learning outcomes included individual faculty of the program, TAG-Ohio Transfer Assurance Guidelines, the Ohio Transfer Module, and discipline-specific accreditation bodies such as the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Of the 103 courses that completed the reports, the following number of courses aligned their course goals with the general education outcomes:

- Information Literacy: 16
- Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning and Literacy: 23
- Critical Thinking and Integrative Learning: 32
- Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility: 25
- Communication: 28

### *Assessment Strategies*

A diverse range of strategies were utilized to assess student learning in the general education courses taught in spring 2014. Examples of the types of strategies employed are highlighted below:

*Information Literacy*-Almost 3300 students in 157 course sections participated in general education classes offered by the English department in the spring of 2014. To help manage the assessment process, the department administered a survey to faculty to gather data on student performance related to the general education outcomes. The survey collected the results of pre and post-test data of student achievement in both communication and information literacy skills. Their analysis indicated that the number of students meeting or exceeding their criteria increased in the post-test results when compared to pre-test scores.

Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning and Literacy-The Biological Sciences department identified specific exam and homework questions, and in-class clicker questions aligned with the general education outcome-Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning and Literacy to assess student performance. Their results indicated that students were very successful in answering lower order questions that required memorization skills, but less able to apply learned concepts to new problems. They also identified that lower scores on laboratory reports generally represented students who did not follow the proper directions. The actions identified by the department to address these issues included providing more in class practice of applying concepts to problem solving and requesting laboratory teaching assistants to stress the importance of following the directions when submitting reports.

Critical Thinking and Integrative Learning-The Economics department shared an example of continuous improvement by comparing student scores from spring 2014 to student scores from the previous year. The faculty member shared that although the current scores on one exam question tied to the general education outcomes did not meet the goal of 70% of students indicating the correct response, their scores had increased from 42% last year to 57% this term. The professor noted to stress the importance and limitations of the related concepts in future sections of the course.

Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility-The Philosophy and Religious Studies department sampled assignments across several sections of the same course and utilized rubrics to outline work that met/exceeded expectations, partially met expectations, and was below expectations. Their analysis found that a greater percentage of students than expected were performing below expectations on one common assignment. The faculty identified two intervention strategies to address the issue for next year.

Communication-The Honors College also sampled student work and assessed student performance based on a common rubric. Their results showed that students had a high degree of competency in their written communication skills and their ability to evaluate, interpret, and synthesize information from primary and secondary sources. The results also led to the discovery that the requirements for research assignments were not uniform across sections of the same course. They recommended the faculty develop another rubric outlining common elements, such as the number and quality of sources to be used in research projects and papers, to create a more uniform learning experience for students.

### *University Recommendations*

The majority of reports did not identify specific recommendations for the university to address. The responses provided discussed increasing resources aligned with six major themes:

1. First-year and at-risk students-The English department suggested expanding resources available for at-risk students and working towards increasing retention from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> semesters. The Film and Theater faculty recommended that incoming students receive services to assist with writing, public speaking, time management, and project management skills. Environmental Science and Women and Gender Studies identified the need for a more structured, institution-wide approach to identify underprepared students, and a more robust program for the first semester of incoming students that emphasizes developing a work ethic, time management, study skills, and connections to services such as tutoring and writing support. In addition, it was noted to identify support for students with low literacy

rates prior to enrolling in undergraduate courses and to increase scholarship support for low-income students to allow them to have more time to focus on their course work.

2. Expansion of the Writing Center and writing skills resources-In addition to the comments related to first-year and at-risk students, several departments specifically mentioned the Writing Center and/or improving students' writing skills as a potential focus for the institution. The English department requested more resources for English as a second language and international writers, Environmental Science linked clear writing with clear thinking skills and expressed concerns that students' poor writing capabilities were reflected in their ability to interpret information and express it's meaning in written form. They suggested that the institution explore a more rigorous assessment of incoming students' writing skills. Business noted that writing is a practiced skill, and that students should have their submissions read and edited with the help of one-on-one tutoring. Psychology would like to offer smaller sections of its general education course to allow for an increased number of writing assignments. Geography and Planning requested additional support from the UT Writing Center.
3. Faculty support for curriculum revision and assessment design-Several departments identified teaching support as an area to focus on as an institution. The Honors College recommended providing help to faculty in curriculum revision, specifically for creating rubrics and other assessment tools. The Philosophy and Religious Studies department suggested continued work with instructors in course planning to make data collection on relevant student learning outcomes using aligned assessment strategies a familiar and regular part of every section taught. They also proposed wider use of the assessment tools in Blackboard to gather and store sample assignments, use rubrics, and to prepare reports, creating a more efficient process and an electronic archive of assessment activities. In addition they suggested a timeline for notification of general education reporting expectations, and the use of a departmental assessment coordinator to manage the sampling of student work for review. The Psychology department recommended that the institution replace lost faculty lines to increase the number of faculty available to teach courses.
4. Library-The English faculty members teaching courses emphasizing information literacy asked for more resources be allocated to the library, allowing librarians the ability to offer more assistance to students across campus.
5. Student engagement and experiential learning -Business and Environmental Science were interested in expanding internship opportunities and identifying strategies to better engage students in their studies. One report noted the importance of class attendance with engaged participants rather than relying on students simply spending time in their seat as a measure of their learning.
6. Studying foreign language-The faculty members reporting from the foreign language courses requested that the institution consider a minimum foreign language requirement of two semesters.



## Summary of Related Institutional Data

In addition to the information shared in the individual course reports, Institutional Research provided related data for each general education course offered during the spring 2014. Below is a summary of the data organized and reported by general education outcome.

Table one summarizes course information obtained from Institutional Research related to student enrollment, pass, fail, and withdraw rates with the general education outcomes framework.

Table 1:  
Course Offerings, Student Enrollment, and Student Pass, Fail, Withdraw Rates by Outcome

Outcome	Number of Courses	Number of Sections	Enrollment	% Pass	% Fail	% Withdraw/Other Final Grade
Information Literacy	16	144	4234	87%	8%	5%
Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning	23	119	5949	79%	15%	6%
Critical Thinking and Integrative Learning	32	165	6046	80%	14%	6%
Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility	25	98	4955	85%	9%	6%
Communication	28	208	5498	83%	11%	6%
Other*	40	155	4577	84%	9%	7%

\*See page 6

Table two identifies the average student to faculty ratio of the courses for each outcome. The ratios ranged from 26 students to one faculty member in courses emphasizing communication skills, to 51 students to one faculty member in courses focused on Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility.

Table 2:  
Average Student to Faculty Ratio by Outcome

Outcome	Ratio
Information Literacy	29:1
Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning	50:1
Critical Thinking and Integrative Learning	37:1
Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility	51:1
Communication	26:1
Other	30:1

Twenty general education courses had a student failure rate above 15%. Table 3 identifies the number of courses in each outcome category with the failure rates above 15%. Some courses aligned with multiple general education outcomes and therefore the total number of courses listed in the table is more than twenty.

Table 3:  
Number of Courses with Student Failure Rates Above 15% by Outcome

Outcome	# of courses above 15% fail rate
Information Literacy	0
Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning	7

Critical Thinking and Integrative Learning	5
Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility	2
Communication	2
Other	10

## Future Discussion

The work completed in the 2013-2014 academic year to assess the general education curriculum has led to several topics that will need further consideration moving forward. Questions remain regarding how to best align the UT general education curriculum with requirements from the State of Ohio and how to best utilize our resources to support general education. The committee will also continue to improve the process by which general education is assessed.

### *State Compliance and General Education at UT*

According to the *Guidelines and Procedures for Academic Program Review*, the State of Ohio currently requires that the minimum general education requirement of thirty-six semester credit hours for baccalaureate degrees be composed of OTM approved courses. The Faculty Senate (FS) is currently engaged in discussions regarding a revision of the general education curriculum. Based on one interpretation of state requirements, it is possible that the FS will adopt a general education curriculum that is solely comprised of courses approved by the state as part of our Ohio Transfer Module (OTM). If this revision is adopted, then the general education courses that are subject to assessment will change. These changes could also affect learning outcomes for general education courses, as many OTM courses must adhere to a specified set of learning outcomes proscribed by the state. These issues will continue to impact the assessment of general education courses during the 2014-2015 reporting cycle.

### *Leveraging university resources*

The State Share of Instruction is currently based 50% on degree completion, but without support for remedial courses. In addition, the historical tradition of open access enrollment at the University of Toledo attracts a student population with a wide range of skills and abilities. As a result of these circumstances, unique challenges exist in helping underprepared students achieve success in completing their general education requirements. Whereas the general education curriculum serves as the foundation for undergraduate education, an important goal remains to identify underprepared students early enough in their institutional careers to help guide them to appropriate resources for assistance. Although the institution continues to develop best practices to help students, almost twenty percent of the general education courses offered in the spring of 2014 had a student failure rate above 15 percent. Stronger connections between faculty teaching general education courses and university initiatives designed to assist students attain academic success would benefit underprepared students. One example of a university resource designed to support students success is the Learning Enhancement Center. The center currently provides supplemental instruction for eight science courses, six of which are part of the general education curriculum. Data show that students who participate in the supplemental instruction program achieve higher grades. Each of the general education courses that also provide supplemental instruction through the Learning Enhancement Center had a spring 2014 student failure rate below fifteen percent. Could

other general education courses benefit from similar support? Additional meaningful connections between the general education program and resources designed to improve college-readiness should be explored.

### *Revising the General Education Assessment Process*

The current general education assessment process involves three measures of student success: 1) collecting assessment reports for each course taught per semester; 2) administration of the Collegiate Learning Assessment to both first-year and senior level undergraduate students on a bi-annual basis; and 3) student pass, fail and withdraw rates for each general education course provided by Institutional Research. Although each of these measures offers useful data to review the general education program, they provide an incomplete picture of its effectiveness. The general education assessment committee continues to explore options to improve the quality of the assessment data gathered and to conduct meaningful analysis of the data with limited faculty time and resources. One goal is to determine a more manageable review schedule for each general education outcome, rather than continuing to ask faculty to report on every outcome each semester. Examining if the Blackboard Outcomes tool could also be helpful to some faculty in assessing their courses may also help to reduce the faculty time needed to review data.

The spring 2014 course reports were submitted in a variety of ways, adding additional time to the process of reviewing and analyzing the data. The committee, in conjunction with the University Assessment Committee, and the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Program Review is currently working on developing an online database and submission process for future reports to increase the efficiency of the reporting process.

Another future goal for the committee is to develop a comprehensive general education website to provide more information to students and other stakeholders about the purpose of general education and the strategies utilized to assess its effectiveness.

Appendix A  
General Education Assessment Report

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Semester: Spring 2014

Course #: \_\_\_\_\_ # of sections: \_\_\_\_\_

Learning Outcome	Source of Outcome	How is Student Achievement of this Outcome Measured? (Assessment Strategy)
1.		
2.		
3.		

1. Complete the table above by providing the following:
  - a. The student learning outcomes being assessed within your general education course.
  - b. The source of this learning outcome - core competency (provided on the following page for your reference), Transfer Assurance Guide (TAG), Ohio Transfer Module (OTM), degree program requirement or other. If other please provide a brief description.
  - c. The assignment(s) or performance observation(s) that will be used to address the corresponding student learning outcome. These assignments or performance observations should be common to each section of the general education course.
  
2. Department samples and summarizes results from the assignments or performance observations identified to assess student learning outcomes across all sections of the general education course.
  
3. Answer the following questions:
  - a. Use the assessment results to identify the strengths of your students.
  - b. Use the assessment results to identify the weaknesses of your students.
  - c. Based on your results, what action item(s) will the department address in the next academic year?
  - d. If your department reported information from question 3c last year, summarize how your department addressed the action item(s) from the previous year. What were your results?
  - e. Based on your results, what action item(s) do you recommend the institution address in the next academic year?
  
4. Please attach a copy of the master syllabus for this general education course.

For your reference, the core competencies are as follows:

- a. Communication: UT students must demonstrate abilities to communicate meaningfully, persuasively, and creatively with different audiences through written, oral, numeric, graphic and visual modes.
- b. Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning and Literacy: UT students must demonstrate the capacity to apply mathematical reasoning and scientific inquiry to diverse problems.
- c. Personal, Social and Global Responsibility: UT students must demonstrate understanding of and critical engagement in ethical, cultural and political discourse and capacity to work productively as a community member committed to the value of diversity, difference, and the imperatives of justice.
- d. Information Literacy: UT students must demonstrate the ability to find, organize, critically assess, and effectively use information to engage in advanced work in a challenging field of study. Students should demonstrate responsible, legal, creative and ethical use of information.
- e. Critical Thinking and Integrative Learning: UT students must be able to integrate reasoning, questioning and analysis across traditional boundaries of viewpoint, practice and discipline.

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Appendix B

**2014-2015 General Education Assessment Report**

*Instructions:* Prior to completing this report, the department samples and summarizes results from the assignments or performance observations identified to assess student learning outcomes across all sections of the general education course. Based on your results, please complete the table and questions below for the general education outcomes that most closely align with your course.

<b>Department Name:</b>			<b>Semester(s) course was taught:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Fall 2014 <input type="checkbox"/> Spring 2015		
<b>Course Name and Number:</b>			<b># of Sections:</b>		
<b>Student Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Most Closely Aligned General Education Outcome*</b>	<b>How is Student Achievement of this Outcome Measured? (Assessment Strategy)</b>	<b>Percentage of students in each category:</b>		
			<i>Exceeds expectations</i>	<i>Meets expectations</i>	<i>Did not meet expectations</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific & Quantitative Reasoning & Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Information Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking and Integrated Learning				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific & Quantitative Reasoning & Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Information Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking and Integrated Learning				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific & Quantitative Reasoning & Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility <input type="checkbox"/> Information Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking and Integrated Learning				

\* Descriptions of the general education outcomes are included for your reference at the end of this document.

5. Complete the table above by providing the following:
  - d. The student learning outcomes being assessed within your general education course. (please add additional rows if necessary)
  - e. The general education outcome that most closely aligns with the student learning outcome.
  - f. The assignment(s) or performance observation(s) that will be used to address the corresponding student learning outcome. These assignments or performance observations should be common to each section of the general education course.
  - g. Based on the results of your assessment, identify the percentage of students whose performance exceeded your expectations, met your expectations, and did not meet your expectations for each outcome.
  
6. Answer the following questions based on your assessment results:
  - a. Identify the strengths of your students.
  - b. Identify the weaknesses of your students
  - c. What action item(s) will the department address in the next academic year?
  - d. If your department reported information from question 2c last year, summarize how your department addressed the action item(s) from the previous year. What were your results?
  - e. What action item(s) do you recommend the institution address in the next academic year?
  
7. Please submit a copy of the master syllabus for this general education course with your completed report.

## **General Education Outcomes**

- 1. Communication:** *UT students must demonstrate abilities to communicate meaningfully, persuasively, and creatively with different audiences through written, oral, numeric, graphic and visual modes.*
- 2. Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning and Literacy:** *UT students must demonstrate the capacity to apply mathematical reasoning and scientific inquiry to diverse problems.*
- 3. Personal, Social, and Global Responsibility:** *UT students must demonstrate understanding of and critical engagement in ethical, cultural, and political discourse and capacity to work productively as a community member committed to the value of diversity, difference, and the imperatives of justice.*
- 4. Information Literacy:** *UT students must demonstrate the ability to find, organize, critically assess, and effectively use information to engage in advanced work in a challenging field of study. Students should demonstrate responsible, legal, creative, and ethical use of information.*
- 5. Critical Thinking and Integrative Learning:** *UT students must be able to integrate reasoning, questioning, and analysis across traditional boundaries of viewpoint, practice, and discipline.*