Muhlenberg College General Education Assessment Plan

Approved by Academic Policy Committee, October 2022

Purpose of General Education Assessment

Assessment of the General Education curriculum at Muhlenberg serves several complementary functions that support student engagement, faculty development, and the mission of the institution. The purpose of general education assessment is:

1) To insure that our graduates have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions consistent with the goals of the academic program

2) To provide evidence for on-going examination of the general education program

3) To support faculty engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning

Guiding Principles of General Education Assessment

Valid and reliable assessment of student learning at Muhlenberg will be guided by the following principles:

1) Assessment may include both direct and indirect evidence of student learning

2) Assessment activities need to be practical, useful, and not burden or detract faculty from their responsibilities as teachers and scholars. Wherever possible, assessment should use existing course assignments (embedded assessments) and not add additional work for students or faculty.

3) Assessment evaluates broad academic goals and curricular elements, not individual courses, faculty, or students.

4) Student work used for assessment purposes will remain anonymous and only aggregate results will be shared in any reports.

5) General Education Assessment at Muhlenberg will be consistent with the 9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning as outlined below:

9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

1. **The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.**
Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only *what* we choose to assess but also *how* we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

2. **Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.**
Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods, including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.**
Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations -- those derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way -- about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help us understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.
Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative. Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can
be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the process of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and

illuminates questions that people really care about.
Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This
implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

8. **Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.**
Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.**
There is a compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation -- to ourselves, our students, and society -- is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.[1]

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Support for Assessment Activities at Muhlenberg

The Dean of Institutional Research, Assessment and Effectiveness (DIRAE) will oversee and provide support for all academic assessment activities. The Coordinator of GAR Assessment and the Registrar will provide additional support and resources as needed. The Institutional Research and Assessment website provides resources for general education and program assessment: http://www.muhlenberg.edu/main/aboutus/ir/

General Education Assessment Plan

APC (Academic Policy Committee) and CC (Curriculum Committee) are responsible for broad oversight of General Education assessment as outlined in the Faculty Handbook. APC is responsible for creating the general assessment timeline, reviewing assessment reports, and making recommendations to the faculty regarding curricular changes or changes to learning outcomes that are recommended by the assessment team for each general education requirement assessment. CC works with APC to ensure that recommended changes to learning outcomes are well defined, meet the goals of the general education requirements and are useful for designating courses that fulfill a requirement. As needed, a joint ad-hoc committee of members from both committees will be created to target specific assessment activities. The Provost, the DIRAE and the Registrar will provide support for the committees' work.

1) The DIRAE will provide reports on results of national surveys (e.g., NSSE, HEDS) that align with Academic Program Goals to APC and CC. APC and CC will use results to inform faculty discussions, to develop proposals for review of specific curricular elements, and to suggest revisions to the General Education Assessment Plan.

2) At the onset of the assessment of a curricular element, the Provost will appoint either 2-3 full time faculty ("assessment coordinators")who

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teach courses that fulfill that element, or utilize existing committee/advisory boards,to be in charge of the actual assessment work. Each of these assessment coordinators will receive a stipend to support their work over a 2-year period. At the start of the assessment process, these faculty will oversee an initial discussion with faculty, who teach courses that fulfill the specific requirement, the development and implementation of the assessment plan for that area, which will include a plan for data collection (indirect/direct), to assess student competency for the curricular requirement. The Coordinators will submit the plan to APC, CC and the Coordinator of GAR Assessment for feedback and approval. The Coordinators will proceed with the assessment. At the completion of the assessment, the faculty members will also organize a discussion with participating faculty to review and interpret the findings, and draft a report and submit it to representatives of APC and CC members, the Coordinator of GAR Assessment and the DIRAE. If changes are needed, the faculty will make suggestions regarding any changes to learning outcomes or the general academic requirement. The Coordinator of GAR Assessment will oversee and support the work, along with the DIRAE.

3) APC will review the report and consider recommended changes to the curriculum or learning outcomes. APC makes the determination as to whether these changes require full faculty discussion and bring these changes to the full faculty, if necessary. They will also work with the DIRAE and Registrar to ensure that any changes to learning outcomes or a curriculum are reflected in official college documents and online.

4) Upon the review of a full cycle of GAR assessments, APC will review the reports and engage the faculty in discussions about the current GAR requirements as they relate to our institutional learning goals.

Summary Table of Steps in GAR Assessment Process

Assessment Stage	Major Tasks	Involved Parties	End Goal	Estimated Duration
Assessment initiation	Appointment of GAR assessment-coordinators (2-3 faculty who teach courses that meet the particular GAR to be assessed)	Provost in consultation with relevant administrators	Establish GAR assessment coordinators and timeline for assessment	3 months
Pre-Assessment data gathering	Information is gathered from faculty regarding the GAR in question and their intended learning goals in these courses. Faculty should be given the opportunity to provide feedback on the current learning goals and determine the extent to which these match the current practices. GAR assessment coordinators should review benchmark learning goals.	GAR assessment coordinators, with broad input from faculty who teach particular GAR; support provided by GAR Assessment Coordinator, CC, and/or Appropriate GAR Advisory Board	Determination of learning goals to be assessed	1 semester
Development of assessment methodology	GAR assessment coordinators develop a plan to assess the learning goals. This may be through direct and/or indirect assessment approaches.	GAR assessment coordinators in consultation with GAR AC; assessment plan reviewed by DIRAE, APC, and CC		1 semester
Data gathering	Assess GAR, using direct and/or indirect assessment methods	Designated GAR assessment coordinators with assistance of GAR coordinator and DIRAE		1 semester

Analysis and Writing of Assessment Report	Draft report and consult with members of APC, CC, and as needed designated GAR committee, GAR coordinator and DIRAE. The DIRAE works with the assessment team to ensure that comments are addressed and edits completed.	Designated GAR assessment coordinators	Actionable recommendations	1 semester
Report Completion	Final Report is submitted to APC for review, which should include recommended next steps that may include consideration of changes to learning outcomes or the GAR requirement	APC and Designated GAR assessment coordinators	GAR is reaffirmed or faculty consider revision of GAR or learning outcomes	1 meeting

5) When new learning outcomes are revised they will be written in such a manner that they are consistent with those of other GAR requirements.

Suggested General Education Assessment Timeline

The suggested timeline is informed by assessment activities in process and takes into account the implementation dates for elements in the General Education program. This plan may be altered at any time due to curricular revisions, staffing issues, or other factors.

GAR Assessment Timeline

GAR	Initial Assessment/Changes to GAR or learning outcomes	Planned Assessment Years	Notes
Art	2018/new learning goals approved 8/30/2019	2025	
CUE		2023	
HDGE	2018	2028**	
Humanities	2022	2027	
Integrated Learning	First assessed as a cluster GAR in 2015	2025	*IL replaced the cluster requirement 9/1/2017 for graduating class of 2021 and after.
L2	2014; new learning goals approved 2/18/22	2024	
Natural Sciences & Math	2018/approved new learning goals 4/20/2018	2026	
Reasoning	2019/new learning goals approved 8/30/2019	2026	
Social Sciences	2019/new learning goals	2027	

	approved 8/28/20		
Writing	2016	2024	
PPD		2023	** PPD replaced physical education GAR 4/20/2018.
RP		2028**	
GE		2028**	

** Curricular change in progress Fall 2022; new GARs not yet approved.

Current Learning Outcomes

Arts

Learning Goals
- Employ discipline-specific processes to realize and communicate an artistic vision
- Understand a particular artistic endeavor through consideration of the language, techniques, and contexts of its production
- Reflect on how sustained engagement with artistic practices leads to discovery and innovation.

Culminating Undergraduate Experiences (CUEs)

Learning Goals
- Demonstrate competence in their field of study at an appropriate level as determined by the department/program
- Practice integrative and applied learning
- Construct a bridge between past learning experiences and the future

Human Difference and Global Engagement courses (HDGE)

Learning Goals
- Understand the multiple contexts (e.g., cultural, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, etc.) that shape construction of human difference
- Recognize how hierarchies and disparities share and are shaped by institutions and social relations
- Make principled decisions as individuals and citizens of local, national, and global communities
- Develop a capacity to act on the basis of one's own reasoned beliefs

Humanities

Learning Goals
- Employ analysis, critical reasoning and historical reflection to interpret and evaluate matters of human concern, experience and expression
- Apply knowledge and understanding of human activity and world views across time, geography, and cultures

Integrative Learning

Learning Goals
- Understand relationships among various ways of knowing, and recognize the strengths and limitations of different approaches for comprehending phenomena.
- Use diverse perspectives and their vocabularies to intentionally recognize and solve problems, address existing questions, and ask new questions.
- Adapt and apply various perspectives developed in other contexts to new situations, while realizing the strengths and limitations of these different approaches

- Communicate the value of an integrative experience

<u>**Language Requirement**</u>

The Languages, Literatures, and Cultures department will oversee assessment of the Language requirement.

Learning Goals
Elementary I & II
- read, write, speak and understand the target language ranging from the low to the high novice level according to ACTFL standards
- appreciate the links between language and cultural meaning at a basic level
- recognize that there are linguistic and structural differences between English and the target language

Intermediate I & II
- read, write, speak and understand the target language ranging from the low to the high intermediate level according to ACTFL standards
- appreciate the links between language and cultural meaning at a somewhat more advanced level
- recognize the ways in which the target language has influenced American English and culture at a somewhat more advanced level

Goal 1: Speaking – Grammatical Accuracy (verb tenses, vocabulary, ease of expression)
Goal 2: Listening – Aural comprehension of questions
Goal 3: Writing – Grammatical Accuracy (verb tenses, vocabulary, spelling, ease of expression)
Goal 4: Reading – Recognition of contextualized words and/or phrases, verb tenses, main ideas, description and narration
Goal 5: Cultural Competency – Cultural norms of specific regions, linguistic differences within cultural contexts

		Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5
		Speaking	Listening	Writing	Reading	Cultural Competency
101	Elementary I	I	I	I	I	I
102	Elementary II	I	I	I	I	I
203	Intermediate I	D	D	D	D	D
204	Intermediate II	D	D	D	D	D

I: Introductory   D: Developing   M: Mastery
Assessment Schedule

Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Learning Goals
- Demonstrate a working knowledge of scientific, mathematical and/or computational vocabulary, theories, and ethical standards.
- Understand different disciplinary methodologies, data analyses, and evidence-based conclusions
- Apply scientific, mathematical and/or computational reasoning to critically evaluate claims.

PPD
Learning Goals
- Reflect on experiences that shape my personal identify: who I am, what strengths I bring and who I want to become
- Identify strategies and resources that enable me to discover my path to personal growth, resilience, and academic success
- Identify how structure of diversity, equity and inclusion connect to my lived experiences as well as how I engage with others
- Apply strategies that align with my values for use within positive community progress and support my relationships with others

Reasoning Requirement

Learning Goal
- Reason effectively using computational, quantitative and/or logical arguments
- Intentionally select and apply systematic and transferable problem solving methods
- Reason effectively with words, numbers, and symbols.

Social Sciences

Learning Goals
- describe and analyze the development and practices (i.e., social, political, economic, and cultural) of individuals and institutions
- identify the influence of individual choice, group behavior, and public policies on individuals and institutions
- recognize the operations of power and ideology across social contexts, relationships, and practices

Writing Across the Curriculum

Learning Goals
- Communicate clearly and cogently
- Write and discuss as a means of learning and discovery