

Proposal for the Direct Assessment of General Education

Prepared by Summer Work Group (2013):

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I.- Preamble: Background and Contexts for the Direct Assessment of General Education

The General Education program is a key part of our students' intellectual development. It constitutes a significant part of student and faculty work, yet we do not know how well students are meeting program goals. While the direct assessment of General Education is required by external reviewers, its greater value is its potential to enhance the work we all already are devoting to this vital program.

Recent History of General Education Assessment at IWU

Over the last few years, Curriculum Council (CC) has revived assessment of the General Education program following a period of assessment inactivity. To date, these activities have included administration and analysis of student surveys, faculty review of Category/Flag goals and criteria, development of an assessment calendar to ensure continued periodic review of each Category/Flag, and transferring the student surveys from paper format to a labor-saving electronic format using Qualtrics. As these processes unfolded and the campus prepared for and then received feedback from the 2012/2013 Higher Learning Commission accreditation, it became clear that the Council's next priority should be direct assessment of the General Education program and the meaningful use of assessment data in improving the program (closing the loop). After considering our campus structure and Chapter 4 of *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education*, 2nd ed. by

- January/February: Convene instructors teaching within the relevant General Education category/flag in order to assist instructors teaching within the category in identifying or developing tools appropriate to the category. AFs will be supported in their work by representatives of CC, the Assessment Committee, the Associate Dean of Curricular and Faculty Development, and the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research, Planning, and Evaluation.*
- February/March: Post the newly developed assessment tools for review and comment by all instructors teaching within the category/flag and revise if necessary.
- April 2: Submit a one-page Action Plan to the Assessment Committee. An Action Plan consists of:
 - What tools will instructors in your category use to directly assess each learning goal? Why?
 - Do you believe, based on the information posted on Illinois Wesleyan's IRB webpage, that the proposed assessment activities are exempt from IRB review or require it? (As only the IRB may grant exemptions, the Assessment Committee will assist those Assessment Facilitators requesting exempt status for their proposed assessment activities by annually filing a request for exemption on their behalf.)
- May: Employing feedback from the Assessment Committee, finalize and disseminate assessment instruments to instructors teaching in the category.

*Note: This document provides a default model for developing assessment tools, implementing them, aggregating the data, and using it for curricular improvement. If instructors teaching in a category/flag believe that a different model would better serve their area, their Assessment Facilitator can petition the Assessment Committee (by March 1st of Semester 1) to implement a different style of Action Plan. Any alternative model must still assess all of the category goals directly, and the data collected must still lead to clear opportunities for improvements in student learning.

Semesters 2-3+

- Fall-May: Regularly remind instructors that they need to perform assessment using the designated tools, collect assessment data, etc.
- Fall-May: Assist instructors with collection of data (i.e., give advice, suggestions, feedback).
- January: Collect very brief assessment data reports from category instructors who taught in the fall.
- May: Collect very brief assessment data reports from category instructors who taught in the spring.
- End of May: Collect very brief assessment data reports from category instructors who

- By early-September: Aggregate data for the whole category; aggregate data for each

Tenure-line faculty may also nominate themselves. The Chair of Curriculum Council or Associate Dean will confirm the willingness of those nominated and ask each of them to provide

Provide a summary of data/results from measures used by your category/flag. Summaries may include quantitative and/or qualitative data. Please do not send reports submitted by individual teaching faculty within the category/flag. Your category/flag can keep files of these as it sees fit. Once these instruments have been evaluated and the necessary summary has been made, your category/flag may keep or destroy them, as is deemed appropriate, bearing in mind the need to maintain confidentiality.

this way, the Report will serve as a useful record of how your category/flag's assessment efforts are evolving.

QUESTION ASKED BY THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

- Do the faculty teaching in the category/flag clearly describe what they learned?

6. What does your category/flag plan to do with the information it has evaluated?

Closing the feedback loop is essential. Please describe exactly what it is your category/flag has