

## Glossary of Helpful Terminology

**ASSESSMENT:** The process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:** An assessment criterion is a characteristic of student learning or performance used in the assessment of an outcome. For example, instructors might use a course paper to evaluate students' critical thinking. They would specify the criteria used to judge the quality of critical thinking. This might include criteria such as 1) supports claims with relevant evidence, 2) draws logical conclusions from the reading material, 3) follows a coherent pattern of thinking, and 4) acknowledges weaknesses in one's own argument.

**ASSESSMENT METHODS:** (see direct assessment; indirect assessment; formative assessment; summative assessment)

**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** The process of collecting, analyzing and using information to improve student learning. It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve student learning.

**COURSE LEVEL, BEGINNING:** The course is suitable for students having 0-30 credits completed.

**COURSE LEVEL, INTERMEDIATE:** The course is suitable for students who have completed at least 30-60 credits of college coursework.

**COURSE LEVEL, ADVANCED:** The course is suitable for students who have completed 60 credits or more of college coursework.

**DIRECT ASSESSMENT:** Direct measures of student learning require students to demonstrate knowledge, skills, dispositions, etc. Direct measures provide data in the form of actual student learning and performance with respect to expected outcomes. Examples include

- **Course-embedded assessments** - projects, assignments, or *exam questions* that directly link to program-level expected learning outcomes and are scored using established criteria.
- **Exams** - locally developed comprehensive exams or entry-to-program exams, national standardized exams, certification or licensure exams, or professional exams.
- **Capstone or Senior-Level** projects, papers, presentations, performances, portfolios, or research evaluated by faculty or external review teams. These are effective as assessment tools when the student work is evaluated in a standard manner that focuses on student achievement of program-level outcomes.

- **Internship or Practicum** - evaluations of student knowledge and skills from internship supervisors, faculty overseers, or from student participants themselves. This may include written evaluations from supervisors focused on specific knowledge or skills or evaluation of student final reports or presentations from internship experiences.
- **Portfolios** - reviewed by faculty members from the program, faculty members from outside the program, professionals, visiting scholars, or industrial boards.
- **Professional Jurors or Evaluators** - assessment of student projects, papers, portfolios, exhibits, performances, or recitals.

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:** Assessment carried out before or during instruction to diagnose and improve student learning. The information is used as feedback by instructors to modify instruction or the curriculum. Formative assessment can take place at the program level if instructors assess student learning at various points and use the information to improve teaching and learning.

**GENERAL EDUCATION:** The common educational experience for all undergraduates at UW-L. It is primarily concerned with the broad education of the whole person and plays a vital role in preparing students for life beyond the university. (Note: The term 'General Education,' in all its forms, will be gradually substituted by the term 'University Core').

**GENERAL EDUCATION – CHAIR:** A member of the General Education Committee elected by the members of the General Education Committee to act as Chair for the committee for a one year term. The Chair is responsible for organizing meetings, establishing sub committees, submitting appropriate reports to the Faculty Senate and for other usual and customary responsibilities. The Chair of the General Education Committee receives no release time from other areas of responsibility or compensation for his or her service.

**GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE:** A standing committee of the Faculty Senate. It consists of nine (9) faculty members from across the UW-L campus with no designated administrative responsibility, a student representative, and is supported by several key advisors from within the UW-L campus community. Its primary purposes include

- Coordinating general education curricula.
- Conducting a systematic review of the General Education Program by examining existing courses on a regular, rotating basis, and recommending curricular changes.
- Reviewing and approving proposals for curricular changes in general education, including changes resulting from revisions of existing courses and proposals for admitting additional courses into the program after these courses have been approved by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.
- Evaluating general education proposals within the established program structure, taking into consideration the needs of students and of society, the mission of the university, the necessity for quality general education, and the goals of the program.

- Consulting formally with the academic departments about coordination of the General Education Program by informing chairpersons in writing of proposals being considered that relate to their programs and by providing adequate opportunity for departments to be heard prior to committee and senate action on such proposals.
- Approving existing specific foreign languages offered as appropriate to the General Education Program.
- Studying different models of interdisciplinary courses, determining their appropriateness for general education, and encouraging faculty to develop such courses.
- Monitoring the development and application of methods for assessing the proficiency of students' skills to ensure that waivers of required skills courses, with or without retroactive credit, are appropriately granted.
- Encouraging the development of additional writing emphasis courses, monitoring their availability and systematically reviewing them according to established guidelines.
- Studying the relationship between the General Education Program and the University Honors Program.
- Authorizing substitutions or waivers for individual students in the General Education Program/University Core Curriculum.

**GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS:** A term being phased out and being replaced with '*General Education Student Learning Outcomes.*'

**GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** The specific skills students should acquire through one or more of their general education courses. Often referred to as 'SLOs.' (See the UW-L General Education website for a complete list of outcome categories and specific outcomes in each category.)

**INDIRECT ASSESSMENT:** Indirect measures of student learning provide data about perceptions of learning or factors that affect learning. For example, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an indirect measure. In one section it asks students to estimate the extent to which their university experience contributes to their knowledge, skills and personal development in a variety of areas (e.g., writing clearly and effectively; thinking critically and analytically). Indirect measures include

- Surveys that assess student perceptions of their learning
- Employer or alumni surveys
- Focus group interviews with students, faculty, alumni
- Exit interviews with students

**INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING:** Engages students actively in learning and thinking about essential knowledge, issues, and questions. As students gain knowledge they also learn to use knowledge more effectively, to ask and answer questions, solve problems, develop ideas, and make sound judgments.

**LEARNING ACTIVITY:** An educational process or procedure intended to stimulate learning through actual experience.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** (see *General Education Student Learning Outcomes*)

**LIBERAL STUDIES COURSES:** Courses that engage students in the study of important areas of knowledge and experience and focus on central questions, issues, and problems we share as people and as members of the same society.

**NON-MEASURES OF STUDENT LEARNING:** Some measures used to assess students, faculty or the curriculum are not suitable as measures of student learning outcomes in a program. Non-measures of student learning include

- Course grades and GPA
- Student Evaluations of Instructors
- Curriculum Review Reports
- Faculty/student ratios
- Course patterns taken by students

**OUTCOME LEVEL:** Degrees of importance, or extent of coverage, given to a particular general education outcome within a particular course (See Outcome Level 1 (high), Outcome Level 2 (low)).

**OUTCOME LEVEL 1:** Outcome is one of the most important components in the course. Students are provided with numerous and on-going opportunities to practice or develop knowledge and skills related to this outcome. Students are expected to demonstrate competence beyond a beginning level. Assignments and other activities throughout the course clearly address this outcome. Assessment of student learning of this outcome is systematic and deliberate.

**OUTCOME LEVEL 2:** Outcome is important for this course, but is not one that you expect students to demonstrate a high level of competence. Students may have a few to several opportunities through assignments and other activities to gain a beginning level of understanding or beginning competence in this outcome. Assessment of student learning includes performance of this outcome with an expectation of a minimal level of competence.

**RUBRIC:** A rubric is a scoring guide for evaluating students' work. A rubric indicates the criteria used to judge student performance and distinguishes different levels of quality in student work.

**SKILLS COURSES:** Courses that improve students' abilities to learn, think, and communicate effectively.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** The knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, dispositions, habits of mind that students acquire as a result of a learning experience. Intended learning outcomes are the knowledge, skills, habits of mind and so forth that instructors want students to acquire as a result of a course or program. Assessment of general education learning outcomes involves measuring the extent to which students actually achieve the intended outcomes of the program.

**SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:** Assessment carried out to determine students' *final* level of achievement with respect to learning outcomes.

**UNIVERSITY CORE:** The common educational experience for all undergraduates at UW-L. It is primarily concerned with the broad education of the whole person, and plays a vital role in preparing students for life beyond the university. (Note: The more common term used on this campus currently is General Education).