

GEAC Assessment Pilot Proposal AY21-22

Rationale/Justification

In 2005, the University of Wisconsin System became the first system to join the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) initiative, launching a series of efforts to champion the value of a liberal education for all college students, as a Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) State. Higher education has been shifting toward ensuring that students are prepared to succeed in a complex world. According to the AAC&U (2015) this requires institutions and educators to ask if all students are experiencing the "most empowering forms of learning and whether they are successfully achieving the knowledge, adaptive skills, and hands-on experiences that prepare them to apply their learning to new settings, emergent problems, and evolving roles" (p.7). The 2019 UWL GEAC report stated that "by explicitly adopting LEAP's Essential Learning Outcomes, which are an updated version of the UW system Shared Learning Goals, UWL can reaffirm its alignment with the UW System and LEAP simultaneously" (p. 6). Additionally, UWL can move toward programmatic assessment and clarify how GE fulfills the mission of the university by adopting, in whole or part, the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes and "unlike the rubrics that instructors create as part of the current GE assessment process, VALUE rubrics are programmatic by design" (GEAC Report, 2019, pp. 7-8). A move to shift to LEAP programmatic assessment was formally approved by GEC on October 21, 2019.

The VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubrics provide the tools to "assess students' own authentic work, produced across students' diverse learning pathways, fields of study and institutions, to determine whether and how well students are meeting graduation level achievement in learning outcomes that both employers and faculty consider essential" (AAC&U, n.d., para. 1). Assessment strategies used by the university can empirically evaluate the relationship between student's learning and development. Ben-Avie et al. (2018) posit

A student's ability to demonstrate learning according to the rubrics is a function of (1) academic habits of mind such as the ability to work autonomously and handle cognitive complexity, (2) content knowledge, (3) interpersonal relationships, and (4) an orientation to the future by setting goals and taking immediate actions to achieve desired futures (para.15).

To that end, "mastering these habits and competencies can change students' developmental trajectory beyond what demographic characteristics and learning prior to college alone can predict" (Ben-Avie et al., 2018, para. 15). As a part of a programmatic assessment, UWL will be able to collect VALUE data, and then use these metrics to demonstrate the effectiveness of the GE program. GEC will also be able to use data from the following proposed Pilot program to guide its planned revision of the GE program.

References

Association of American Colleges and Universities (2015). Committing to equity and inclusion excellence: A campus guide for self-study and planning.
www.aacu.org/diversity/publications.

Association of American Colleges and Universities (n.d.) VALUE: What is VALUE?
<https://www.aacu.org/value>

Ben-Avie, A., Kuna, K. and Rhodes, T. (2018). Assessment as a strategy, no a stand-alone activity. *Peer Review 20:4 Association of American Colleges and Universities*.
<https://www.aacu.org/peerreview/2018/Fall/Analysis>

General Education Assessment Committee (2019). Final Report. University of Wisconsin- La Crosse.
<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/spodintegration/index.html?locale=en-us>

Proposed Structure of the Pilot

LEAP Outcome to Assess

In January 2020, departments were surveyed by GEC and GEAC to determine which LEAP values most related to the goals of their Gen Ed courses. The outcome that appeared most often in the survey was “Critical Thinking.” Based on that determination, GEAC proposes assessing the “Critical Thinking” LEAP value using an adapted VALUE Rubric during the pilot (See appended Rubric). The pilot will include courses from across the colleges and Gen Ed courses at the 100, 200, and 300-levels. During the pilot (2021-2022), GEAC should continue to work with GEC to map LEAP values onto current Gen Ed courses and begin to determine future SLOs and cohorts. Pilot assessment data (collected in Spring 2022) can be used to aid in that mapping. Training and education will be provided to participants beginning Fall 2021 so that instructors are prepared to apply the Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric beginning Spring 2022.

“Cycle” and “Cohort”

The initial pilot program will ask departments to volunteer participation and assess using the “Critical Thinking” VALUE rubric based on the GEC Survey of courses as those that identified critical or creative thinking as their primary SLO (i.e., ranked number 1 on a scale of 1-5), volunteer groups of courses that represent the Gen Ed first benchmark (CST110/ENG110), and any additional volunteer courses that desire to participate. Departments will be notified in late April or early May 2021 if they have been selected by GEC/GEAC to take part in the program. Participants will then be divided into two cohorts across the Fall and Spring semesters as follows:

Cohort I

- Fall 2021 submission of assessment plans to Canvas by October 15 (following old cycle)
- GEAC will review submissions and provide timely feedback in Canvas
- Spring 2022 assessment will take place
- Fall 2022 submission of results and reflection to Canvas by October 15

Cohort II

- Spring 2022 submission of assessment plans to Canvas by March 15
- GEAC will review submissions and provide timely feedback in Canvas
- Fall 2022 assessment will take place
- Spring 2023 submission of results and reflection to Canvas by March 15

Cohort I may consist of a smaller number of participating courses to allow GEAC to focus on education and the submission process in Canvas during Fall 2021. Cohort II may then consist of a larger number of the volunteer courses, including CST110/ENG110. This weighting of the Cohorts would only be necessary during this first phase of the pilot. After the pilot is complete, GEAC and GEC will determine an ongoing cycle and cohorts, which will be grouped by common SLO/VALUE rubric based on a final mapping of current Gen Ed courses. If possible, Cohorts III/IV will submit assessment plans Fall 2022/Spring 2023 based on this new mapping.

Education

GEAC will be working closely with selected courses to complete the submission and assessment process and hopes to work with CATL to offer workshops in the fall for Cohort I and II. We have already been working regularly with CATL to discuss the training and use of VALUE rubrics and should be able to create sample submissions and other informational resources for independent use, and use in the Fall workshops, possibly in a Canvas Module. We can assign pilot instructors to smaller groups to train them in the application of the rubrics and submitting assessments to new Canvas format. Part of that educational process will be determining how the VALUE rubric would be applied on the individual course level. The smaller groups can also be a site for instructors to troubleshoot and share knowledge as they learn and apply the rubric to the new submission process. To facilitate this joint pilot process, we would like to request a CATL liaison to be appointed to GEAC during the pilot program.

Submission Process in Canvas

The full assessment cycle will include:

- Submission of Assessment Plan/Assessment Task as assignment on Canvas submitted by Gen Ed Department-Level Assessment Coordinators and/or participating faculty
- GEAC review of Assessment Plan using rubric by two GEAC reviewers and one Moderator in Canvas (note: we may only be able to have one moderator per “assignment,” but we can change moderator for every cohort/assignment)
- GEAC Moderator sends feedback to Department Assessment Coordinator or Participating Faculty.
- Assessment takes place.
- Assessment Results & Action Plan submitted together by Department Assessment Coordinator and/or participating faculty as assignment in Canvas
- GEAC review of Assessment Results by one reviewer using rubric.
- Submission of Reflective survey by Department Assessment Coordinator and/or participating faculty.

- GEAC will use survey results to assess pilot program.
- Submission of Post Assessment Process Follow-up/Status Report by Assessment Coordinator and/or Participating Faculty.

Assessment Plan Submission and Review:

Department Assessment Coordinator and/or participating faculty will submit Assessment Plan as an assignment to Canvas (See Appended Assessment Task Submission File). The submission will ask for course identifying information, description of the task, alignment of the task to the VALUE rubric, course and GE program learning outcomes, and expectations for student performance. Two GEAC members will be assigned to review this task and create feedback via rubric (See Appended GEAC Task Review Rubric) and comments. Using Canvas' moderated grading feature, one GEAC Moderator will synthesize the two reviewers' feedback into one response to the participating faculty member. If the two reviewers did not agree or there are questions, the Moderator will bring submission to full GEAC for review. A task will either be approved for use or the participating faculty will be asked to address concerns of the reviewers and resubmit. Once approved, the participating faculty will deploy their task in the course, collect VALUE rubric ratings, and move into the next step of the process.

Assessment Results & Action Plan Submission and Review:

Once assessment of task is complete, Coordinator/participating faculty will submit their Assessment Results and Action Plan. This will be submitted as a form in Canvas and include the VALUE rubric results, analysis of those results, and how analysis will be applied to the course for sustaining or improving their courses' pedagogy in support of student learning (See appended Results Submission Form). These submissions will be collated and a report of the ratings and general themes across other questions will be developed by the GEAC with support from the Assessment Coordinator.

Reflective Survey:

Coordinator/Participating faculty will also be asked to submit their reflections on the overall process and process elements (training, VALUE rubric application, GEAC feedback, submission format) with the goal of understanding and improving the process (See appended Reflective Survey). GEAC members will review these items and work to incorporate ideas for improvements. The committee will also be open to any ongoing communications from participants during the pilot. A summary of these submissions will be developed by the committee.

Follow-up:

One term after the assessment cycle is complete, Coordinator/participating faculty will fill out a brief survey reflecting on the efficacy of the assessment-based changes they made to their courses (See appended Assessment Status Report Survey). The goal of this status report is to monitor how faculty have made use of their results at the course level.

Conclusion

GEAC acknowledges that this is a big change, and we will need to help instructors through this. But we think it will be an effective approach to programmatic assessment based on the prior work done by the Gen Ed Assessment workgroup, GEC, and GEAC, over the past years. We anticipate the process itself will uncover opportunities for refinement and revision. For these reasons, the main goals of this pilot program are to: 1. educate the campus and 2. develop the process in a way that considers the various contributions our individual courses have while also facilitating assessment of the Gen Ed program.

Appendix A

Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric Adapted

Original Rubric: [Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric](#)

New Rubric:

Program Milestones	Capstone (4)	Milestone II (3)	Milestone I (2)	Benchmark (1)	Does Not Meet (0)	N/A
Explanation of Issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.		
Evidence	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.		
Influence of Context and Assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.		
Student's Perspective	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.		

	an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).				
Conclusion and Related Outcomes	Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is logically tied to information (because information is chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes (consequences and implications) are identified clearly.	Conclusion is inconsistently tied to some of the information discussed; related outcomes (consequences and implications) are oversimplified.		

Appendix B

Assessment Task Submission File

Pilot Participants,

Please report in the text box below or attach a completed file (downloadable below) that addresses the following questions related to your assessment task and process for the pilot project.

1. Please Identify the Course you are teaching that will be in the pilot. Course Name, Term, Section (if applicable). If you are a coordinator for a multiple section course, please identify yourself as the assessment lead who will be coordinating this project across those sections.
2. Please describe the assessment task you will use to assess student performance. Provide sufficient details so GEAC members can understand what the students will be asked to do or complete to provide evidence of meeting the learning outcome.
3. Please describe the alignment of this task to the VALUE Rubric.
4. After reviewing the VALUE rubric, please share at what level of performance on the VALUE rubric would you reasonably expect most of the students in your course to achieve on these criteria? (Capstone 4, Milestone 3, Milestone 2, Benchmark 1, Below Benchmark 0, N/A)

Thank you for your participation in the pilot project. If you have any questions, please reach out to the GEAC chair.

Appendix C

GEAC Task Review Rubric

Criteria	Ratings		Pts
<p>Assessment Task Clearly Written</p> <p>Assessment Task is Clearly Written and Understandable</p>	<p>1 pts</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>0 pts</p> <p>Needs Revision</p>	1 pts
<p>Alignment with GE SLO</p> <p>Assessment Task Assesses the Criteria of the Gen Ed SLO</p>	<p>1 pts</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>0 pts</p> <p>Needs Revision</p>	1 pts
<p>Task Aligns with the Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric</p> <p>Assessment task would allow students to demonstrate Critical Thinking as formulated on the rubric.</p>	<p>1 pts</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>0 pts</p> <p>Needs Revision</p>	1 pts
<p>Student Performance on VALUE Rubric Expectations Defined</p> <p>Submission indicates the level of student performance on the VALUE rubric which most students might meet</p>	<p>1 pts</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>0 pts</p> <p>Needs Revision</p>	1 pts
Total Points: 4			

Appendix D

Results Submission Form

Submission of Results, Analysis, and Action Steps

Please submit the results of your assessment process and analysis of them.

Your Name/email: _____

Course Title and Prefix: _____

Academic Year/Term of Assessment: _____

1. Results from the VALUE Rubric Ratings for Critical Thinking

	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)	Below Benchmark (0)	N/A
Explanation of issues						
Evidence <i>Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion</i>						
Influence of context and assumptions						
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)						
Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)						

2. Please share any other notes or information on student performance.
3. Did students meet your expectations regarding performance levels on the rubric?
4. Provide your analysis of the results of the assessment process.
5. What improvements or other actions will you take based on these results?
6. What will be your plan moving forward?

Appendix E

Reflective Survey

The General Education Assessment Committee thanks you for your efforts as part of the pilot of the use of VALUE rubrics for assessment of the general education program. We want to learn more about your ideas for how the experience in the pilot could shape improvements to process moving forward.

Please consider the following questions and either submit a file or enter your thoughts into the text box for this assignment.

1. What was most meaningful/positive part about your participation in the pilot?
2. What was the most meaningful challenge to your participation or hindered your process of assessment?
3. How might the training on use of the VALUE rubrics be made more helpful?
4. What would be your suggestions for improvements to the process of using VALUE rubrics for assessment?
5. How could the process of providing feedback on task submissions be made more helpful?
6. Help us by sharing any other thoughts you have about the process.

Thank you, we appreciate your feedback.

Appendix F

Post Assessment Process Follow Up

Post Assessment Process Follow-up

The GEAC would like to gauge how the process of making use of your assessment results from the VALUE pilot has gone. In the pilot, participants were asked to report how they might make improvements to their courses or process in response to the assessment results. We desire to learn what may have occurred the following terms when you next taught the course and if these changes or plans were enacted. Please respond to the two questions below related to your past assessment efforts.

Your Name/email: _____

Course Title and Prefix: _____

Academic Year/Term of Assessment: _____

1. What kinds of improvements were made to your course because of the assessment process? Did these match your initial ideas?
2. What, if anything, made it easier or more difficult to implement changes to your course?