

Report to NDSU Faculty Senate
January 11, 2020
Senate General Education Committee

This report describes three major efforts being undertaken by the General Education Committee in service of (1) strengthening the program, (2) supporting the larger campus work to fulfill our responsibility for assessment of student learning and program quality, and (3) building capacity among faculty and departments for gathering and using evidence of student learning to improve their programs.

EXIGENCY

Accreditation concerns related to ongoing assessment of student learning: The last two HLC accreditation reviews (a campus visit in 2015 and a mid-cycle update in 2020) articulated concerns related to Core Component 4.B (see below) about the lack of a systematic process for gathering and analyzing evidence of student learning throughout our academic program and using that systematic process to support ongoing improvement. Relevant documents are available on the NDSU accreditation page:

- **Mid-cycle review: June 2020**
 - [NDSU Mid-cycle Assurance Argument; June 15, 2020](#)
 - [HLC Mid-cycle Review Final Report; July 17, 2020](#)
- **Previous re-affirmation of accreditation: 2015-2016 academic year**
 - [HLC Re-accreditation Final Report; January 1, 2016](#)
 - [HLC Re-affirmation Letter; March 25, 2016](#)
- **Next re-affirmation of accreditation: 2025-2026 academic year**

Core Component 4.B of HLC *Criteria for Accreditation*:

4.B. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Key concerns in the 2020 HLC review team's [response](#): (p. 34)

- Turnover in assessment leadership
- Lack of evidence that programs have learning outcomes, mapping of outcomes to a curricular map, or completed at least one cycle of assessment

Findings from the 2020 mid-cycle review (applicable to the academic program broadly, but part of the work being undertaken by the General Education committee in its role in curricular review and approval):

“While NDSU has demonstrated a commitment to improving its assessment practices, the review team finds that it has not demonstrated sufficient evidence to support a rating of ‘Meets.’ The team recommends an interim report in three years that provides assurance of the following:

1. All undergraduate and graduate degree programs have established program-level learning outcomes, mapped the learning outcomes to the curriculum, and completed at least two assessment cycles.
2. NDSU provide evidence that its assessment practices produce meaningful and actionable information to improve student learning and support program improvements.
3. NDSU demonstrate substantive involvement of academic and university executive leaders in promoting and supporting assessment of learning.”

CURRENT EFFORTS

The [HLC Assessment Academy](#) provides a structured, mentor-facilitated program aimed at advancing and accelerating an institution’s efforts to assess student learning.

We are participating and team members are as follows:

1. Emily Berg, Director of the Office of Institutional Research & Analysis
2. Jeff Boyer, Director of Assessment & Accreditation
3. Stacy Duffield, Professor (Education, HSE) and past Chair of University Assessment Committee
4. Margaret Fitzgerald, Provost
5. Cassie Gilbert, graduate student in Education and Career Coach in the Career & Advising Center
6. Holly Hassel, Professor (English, AHSS) and Chair of General Education Committee
7. Jessica Jensen, Chair/Associate Professor (Emergency Management, AHSS) and Chair of University Assessment Committee
8. Laura Oster-Aaland, Vice Provost for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management

General Education Re-Validation

- Per the process established by the University Curriculum Committee, the Gen Ed committee is continuing to develop a process for regular review and revalidation of General education Courses. These are at present happening on a five-year cycle. The committee is continuing to refine this approach as we work toward the following:
 - Ensuring that approved courses demonstrate that their associated GE outcomes are clearly with the course curriculum and assessment methods and measures.
 - Developing a plan for gathering *direct* rather than *indirect* measures and evidence of student achievement of GE learning outcomes.

- Using evidence gathered to learn more about whether our Gen Ed program is achieving its stated goals and purpose: “The purpose of general education at NDSU is to ensure that students acquire knowledge, perspectives, and skills basic to a university education. The program is designed so that students will be able to adapt to and anticipate changes in their profession and in society. Students also will be able to integrate and use the knowledge and perspectives they have gained to live productive, intellectually rewarding and meaningful lives.”
- Using information that we gather to continuously improve the quality and depth of student learning through their completion of the General Education requirements.

GERTA+: General Education Requirement Transfer Agreement (GERTA)

- [GERTA](#): North Dakota University System overview of the General Education agreements across the system
- [GERTA Plus | Faculty Senate](#): NDSU page historical overview and documents related to support for GERTA Plus revision that allows for alternative general education program models.
- [NORTH DAKOTA STATE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION](#): NDUS procedures developed by the ND General Education Council and supported by NDSU for the expanded options for General Education programs by individual NDUS institutions.

Faculty Development and Support

- [General Education | Faculty Senate](#)
- [Copy of Workshop: Aligning Outcomes with Assessment Measures | Jan 2021](#)

Resources (available on the [General Education Committee Page](#))

- The GE committee maintains a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document related to course proposals and re-validation.
- GE committee hosted a workshop on 'Aligning Outcomes with Assessment' on January 5, 2020 ([recording](#))
- Members of the GE committee host regular support sessions ([presentation](#)).
- Historical information can be found on the [General Education archive](#).

Respectfully submitted,
 Holly Hassel
 Professor of English
 Chair, General Education Committee