



Guidelines for the Implementation of Campus-based Assessment in the State University of New York

I. Introduction

The State University of New York has a tradition of offering academic programs of the highest quality. At a time when the State University is working to assert a more prominent position in American higher education, its priorities must be to maintain this level of distinction and continuously improve the quality of undergraduate education across the University. We have a responsibility to our students, to the State of New York, and to all constituencies of the University to set standards of excellence that meet and exceed those of our national peers.

We can best reach this objective through a vigorous assessment of our academic programs, both in General Education and the Major, with a particular focus on the student learning outcomes those programs are producing. Such a strategy is in keeping with the nationwide discussion regarding the value of assessment in improving teaching and learning. This strategy is also responsive to the prevalent themes of accrediting bodies, the public's demand for accountability in colleges and universities, and the heightened scrutiny of institutional effectiveness by public officials and state agencies.

Campus-based assessment of General Education and the Major should be rigorous and comprehensive, and the process itself accountable to peers, a tradition that is one of the hallmarks of effective governance.

Reference: Task Force Report, pp. 3-13.

II. Campus-Based Assessment of General Education

Each campus is responsible for determining the particular structure and content of its campus-based General Education assessment plan, following existing governance processes.

The task of developing and implementing a campus-based assessment plan for General Education should fall primarily to the faculty members who teach in the program, with the assistance of professional staff and students when appropriate. (Indeed, it may well be the case that on some campuses a full-time staff and/or faculty assessment person may be in a leadership role.) Campus-based assessment plans should be submitted to, and approved by, the campus's Faculty Senate or Faculty Council.

Initial approval process

Working with the University Faculty Senate and Community College Faculty Council leadership, the Provost will appoint a General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) group, comprised entirely of State University faculty (with staff support as deemed helpful), to provide initial and ongoing review of campus assessment plans. The GEAR group will commence meeting on or about March 1, 2001, and will meet frequently enough during the academic year to ensure timely action on all campus submissions.

The GEAR group, in its “process review” of campus General Education assessment plans, will focus exclusively on the campus’s assessment processes and procedures, not the assessment outcomes themselves. The GEAR group will initially review campus plans to ensure they are comprehensive and rigorous.

A fundamental evaluative criterion will be the extent to which campuses demonstrate the correlation between their General Education assessment plan and the *General Education Implementation Guidelines*. It is recommended that these assessment plans adhere to the following format:

- A clearly-state delineation of the campus’ General Education program’s goals and objectives, including the strategies for the assessment of the learning outcomes delineated in the *General Education Implementation Guidelines*;
- A description of the activities (including the courses) that relate to, and are likely to result in, the achievement of the campus’s programmatic goals and objectives;
- Identification of the assessment measures and criteria to be utilized in determining the degree to which students are meeting the campus’s programmatic and curricular goals and objectives; and
- A description of the process to be used in assessing the campus’s General Education plan, making changes, if suggested, based on assessment findings, and disseminating assessment results to the campus.

Acting within the long tradition of faculty governance, it will be the responsibility of the GEAR group to receive and critique campus assessment plans, and approve those that meet the criteria established by the Task Force for effective assessment. Campuses will receive written notification of revisions that would likely lead to approval, as appropriate.

Ongoing review

Following the initial process review, campuses’ General Education assessment programs will be reviewed on a biennial, staggered basis—with some reviews taking place every year so as to distribute the administrative burden across time. In conducting these reviews, the GEAR group will apply the criteria utilized in the initial process review, with an emphasis on the extent to which campuses demonstrate they are using assessment results to improve their General Education programs.

Campuses will be expected to provide an annual report of their assessment findings to System Administration, including specific information on their students' progress in mastering the learning outcomes outlined in the *General Education Implementation Guidelines*.¹ System Administration will use these data—in accord with the Utilization and Reporting of Assessment Results principles in the Task Force report—in the preparation of summary reports to external stakeholders for accountability purposes. The Chief Academic Officer at each campus will submit this report directly to the Office of the Provost at System Administration

Implementation Timeline

1	General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) group formed.	January 15, 2001
2	Collaborative dialogue with campuses as they develop their General Education Assessment plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GEAR group encourages early submission of draft campus plans and will engage the campus in dialogue and initial review, if requested to do so; • Draft plan readied for discussion by campus Faculty Senate or Faculty Council; • Approval by campus Faculty Senate or Faculty Council; • Unified campus response presented to GEAR group. 	March 1, 2001– January 31, 2002 March 1, 2001-July 15, 2001 October 1, 2001 (suggested) November 15, 2001 (suggested) January 31, 2002
3	Review and approval of campus General Education Assessment plans by the GEAR group. Campuses that have already discussed their plans with GEAR during the period from March 1, 2001 to January 31, 2002 would likely receive an expedited response.	February 1, 2002– May 31, 2002
4	Implementation of General Education assessment on all SUNY campuses.	Fall 2002
5	Initial Annual Report on campus-based assessment of General Education from campus Chief Academic Officers.	June 1, 2003
6	First annual SUNY Best Practices in Assessment conference.	Fall 2003

Reference: Task Force Report, pp. 14-17, Appendix A, pp. 32-33.

¹ Campuses will use a standardized format, to be developed jointly by campuses and System Administration. Reported results should indicate the percentage of students exceeding, meeting, approaching, and not meeting the delineated learning outcomes.

III. Campus-Based Assessment of the Major

Each campus is responsible for overseeing the process through which the assessment of academic major programs takes place, following existing curriculum and governance procedures. Campuses and programs have maximum autonomy in the development of assessment plans for academic majors, and should include the input of faculty, professional staff, and students.

It is important to note that the assessment of student learning outcomes comprises only a part of the comprehensive program review process academic programs should undergo on a regular basis in order to stay current and provide the best possible education to their majors. The *Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs*² continues to be a good working document accepted by the faculty for guiding program review and the Task Force recommends that the assessment of student learning outcomes in the Major be carried out within the broader framework of the University Faculty Senate's guidelines. All programs should meet the following requirements in carrying out their assessment plan:

- Programs should complete one cycle of assessment every five to seven years. If a review of the major has not been done within the past decade, it should occur early in this cycle;
- Programs should include measures of student learning outcomes in their plans;
- Programs should seek review of their final assessment report by an external review team, including a campus visit and report to the chief academic officer;³ and,
- Programs should include in their plans some strategy for measuring change in students' knowledge and skills over time, specific to designated learning outcomes.

Implementation Timeline

1	Campuses begin planning for campus-based assessment of the Major, following existing governance processes.	January 2001
2	Chief Academic Officers submit the schedule for the five- to seven year cycle of program review to the Office of the Provost at System Administration.	June 1, 2001
3	Campus-based assessment of the Major begins. (Since this will be on a five- to seven-year cycle, it can begin with programs for which campuses have an extant process.)	Fall 2001
4	Chief Academic Officers submit initial summary of the academic programs that underwent review during the year and the major findings, as well as a listing of programs scheduled for review during the next academic year to the Office of the Provost at System Administration.	June 1, 2002

² Approved by the University Faculty Senate in 1983 and reissued in 1990. A further revision is expected.

³ This could become a part of a more comprehensive, cyclical departmental or school review.

Please see further recommendations regarding reporting format and utilization of assessment findings, pp. 26-27.

Reference: Task Force Report, pp. 15-17.

IV. Campus-Based Assessment of Intellectual Growth

Measuring an individual's intellectual growth presents a very complex set of issues requiring sophisticated solutions. The complexity of these issues and the relationship between this growth and the course of studies that a student pursues at the college level dictate that the measurement of this growth is best accomplished at the campus level, possibly at the program level.

Campuses are encouraged to develop procedures—perhaps as part of their assessment of General Education and the Major—for demonstrating how their academic programs contribute to students' intellectual growth and development.⁴

Reference: Task Force Report, p. 28.

V. Mission Review Funding Proposals

Campuses may also wish to consider developing Mission Review Funding proposals based on a number of aspects of assessment. These might include, for example, innovative and promising initiatives for:

- campus-based assessment of General Education and of the Major;
- demonstrating how campus academic programs contribute to students' intellectual growth; and
- collaborative, volunteer, multi-campus proposals for assessment initiatives (e.g., gauging students' attainment in General Education learning outcomes such as mathematics, the scientific method, basic communication, critical thinking, and information management).

⁴ There is no requirement to do so.