General Education

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan



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**General Education at RIT**

Through a unique blend of curricular and experiential programs delivered within a student-centric culture, Rochester Institute of Technology prepares its students for successful careers in a global society. The General Education curriculum is a signature learning experience with outcomes focused on core knowledge and skills that support student success and complement specialized learning in the degree programs.

RIT’s **General Education Framework** is outcomes-based to clearly define the knowledge and skills that students gain. After highly collaborative and extensive reviews, the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes (GE SLOs)** were approved in May 2009, revised in 2013 and 2015, and have undergone minor revisions since. The General Education curriculum was developed to provide a cohesive and meaningful pathway to student achievement of RIT’s sixteen General Education Student Learning Outcomes (see Appendix A).

**Communication** and **Critical Thinking** are Essential Elements of RIT’s General Education Framework, and every General Education course provides learning experiences designed to achieve at least one student learning outcome from each of these elements. Additionally, the seven Perspective course categories promote different ways of knowing about the world. Courses in these categories introduce students to the fundamentals of liberal arts and sciences (methods, concepts, and theories) while emphasizing a General Education student learning outcome.

**Assessment of General Education Student Learning Outcomes: Principles and Guidelines**

RIT is committed to comprehensive, systematic, and meaningful assessment practices. To determine the extent to which students are achieving the GE SLOs, a wide-ranging, coordinated, and data-driven system of assessment was developed (see Appendix B) and implemented. Assessment findings are shared with faculty and used to make improvements. RIT’s commitment to a high-quality assessment system includes:

* A focus on direct measures of student learning
* Faculty involvement in course-embedded and student artifact assessment
* A focus on student learning and success
* The use of data to inform planning and decision-making
* Recognition that assessment is essential to teaching and learning

**General Education Faculty Teams**

Each General Education Student Learning Outcome has its own team comprised of faculty from across the university with expertise in the given discipline. Faculty with expertise in the content areas serve as consultants, reviewers, statisticians, and mentors in the assessment process. General Education Faculty Teams (re)convene to review, plan, and design or refine methods and instruments and to set or review achievement benchmarks for each General Education Outcome. The concept of the General Education Faculty Team is based on the principle that the more faculty are engaged and involved in assessment, the more successful and meaningful the assessment will be. See Appendix C for RIT’s Faculty Engagement Model.

**Assessment Planning and Processes**

RIT follows an established assessment schedule to ensure that each General Education Student Learning Outcome is assessed at least once every four years (see Appendix D). Outcomes are grouped into themes (e.g., Communication) to facilitate focused and meaningful sharing and use of assessment results.

Courses are aligned to the General Education Student Learning Outcomes and are selected for assessment using RIT’s Student Information System (SIS). SIS makes it possible to easily map, select, and track courses that are approved as General Education and align to the General Education Student Learning Outcomes.

**Additional Support for General Education Assessment**

The **General Education Committee** (GEC) helps facilitate and support the assessment of student learning outcomes in General Education. The committee was established to review the General Education curriculum and General Education course proposals from a university-wide perspective and maintain appropriate inter-college relationships with regard to General Education matters. The GEC ensures the ongoing monitoring and assessment of General Education Student Learning Outcomes.

The **General Education Assessment Advisory Council (GEAAC)** provides guidance and support to RIT’s general education assessment processes and practices. Established in 2018, GEAAC consists of a cross-disciplinary team of faculty with expertise in areas critical to the General Education framework. The council meets annually to recommend improvements to the assessment practices including, but not limited to, sampling methods, analysis, faculty recruitment, and faculty resources.

**Assessment Instruments and Methods**

The use of multiple measures provides a holistic picture of student learning. RIT’s General Education assessment process focuses on course-embedded assessment results and student artifacts. Direct assessment methods are prioritized as they provide reliable evidence of student learning derived from assignments that are designed and delivered by faculty. As such, assessments are created, implemented, and rated collaboratively by faculty members. Each GE SLO has a corresponding rubric and achievement benchmark, all developed and reviewed by RIT General Education Faculty teams.

Indirect methods have also been used to identify the perception of learning or characteristics associated with learning. Indirect methods include the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Alumni Survey, and the Co-op Student Evaluation. It should be noted that these data sources may not be available every year and are used to supplement direct measures of student learning.

**Data Analysis**

After assessment results are collected and scored, the results are summarized and presented to the faculty. Key questions guide the analysis and interpretation of the findings:

* To what level did the students achieve the student learning outcome?
* What recommendations do the faculty have to improve student achievement of the outcome at the course, department, or university level?
* How will the results be used to impact future course refinements (curriculum, instruction, or assessment)?

**Using Assessment Results for Improvement**

The biggest challenge in assessment is the need to demonstrate that data are used to improve student learning, curriculum, and instruction. The following processes are in place to ensure the closing of the loop at RIT.

**Improving the Learning Experience**

RIT’s assessment plan emphasizes examining and highlighting how the results are used to improve the student learning experience. The majority of our improvements involve making curriculum changes, revising individual General Education courses, adding or revising instructional strategies, and directly addressing student learning needs.

**Systems for Data Analysis**

RIT usesmultiple methods and systems to analyze data from the assessment of General Education Student Learning Outcomes and to improve the data collection, analysis, and reporting process. RIT’s Student Information System (SIS) is used to select courses for assessment. Additional systems include Qualtrics as a data collection tool, the learning management system to share resources, RIT’s Co-op Evaluation database, and custom dashboards for survey items from the National Survey of Student Engagement. Each of these systems and methods is refined and improved, based on assessment findings and data needs.

**Reporting Strategies**

The assessment of RIT's General Education Student Learning Outcomes includes collecting, analyzing, using, and sharing the results annually with appropriate audiences. General Education Assessment Reports document how findings are used to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Results are also presented to various RIT governing bodies and the Board of Trustees.

**Reflection on the Process**

The assessment process is reviewed annually to determine which aspects worked, which didn’t work, and how to improve effectiveness and efficiency. An examination of the goals, instruments, and methodology is part of the annual review. Faculty consider how to make assessments more meaningful and useful and discuss changes to teaching practices or the curriculum.

Appendix A: RIT’s General Education Student Learning Outcomes

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| **Essential Elements of General Education Courses** |
| *Communication and critical thinking are essential to the general education of every student at RIT. Every general education course will provide learning experiences designed to achieve at least one student learning outcome from each of these domains (Communication and Critical Thinking).* |
| **Communication** | Express oneself effectively in common college-level written forms  |
| Revise and improve written products |
| Express oneself effectively in presentations, either in American English or American Sign Language  |
| Demonstrate comprehension of information and ideas accessed through reading |
| **Critical Thinking** | Use relevant evidence gathered through accepted scholarly methods and properly acknowledge sources of information |
| Analyze or construct arguments considering their premises, assumptions, contexts, and conclusions, and anticipating counterarguments |
| Reach sound conclusions based on logical analysis of evidence |
| Demonstrate creative or innovative approaches to assignments or projects |
| **Perspective Domains** |
| *The seven Perspective categories promote different ways of knowing about the world. Courses in these categories will introduce students to the fundamentals of liberal arts and sciences (methods, concepts, and theories) while emphasizing General Education student learning outcomes.* |
| **Ethical** | Identify contemporary ethical questions and relevant positions |
| **Artistic** | Interpret and evaluate artistic expression considering the cultural context in which it was created |
| **Global** | Examine connections among the world’s populations |
| **Social** | Analyze similarities and differences in human social experiences and evaluate the consequences |
| **Natural Science Inquiry** | Demonstrate knowledge of basic principles and concepts of one of the natural sciences  |
| **Scientific Principles** | Apply methods of scientific inquiry and problem solving to contemporary issues and scientific questions |
| **Mathematical** | Comprehend and evaluate mathematical or statistical information |
| **Mathematical** | Perform college-level mathematical operations or apply statistical techniques |

Appendix B: Assessment Process



**How do we know if students are achieving**

**the General Education Student Learning Outcomes (GE SLO’s)?**

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\***Sample** – each semester we strive for a representative sample of students, courses that are offered at more than one location, to expand the number and type of courses in the assessment

\*\***Core assignment** - we provide guidance to faculty on assignment design and selection of assignment(s). Students should have opportunities to practice demonstrating the learning outcome before formally assessed in the course.

Appendix C: Faculty Engagement Model

**PLANNING**

General Education Faculty Teams convene to review, plan, design or refine methods and instruments, and set or review achievement benchmarks for each General Education Outcome (summer).

**USING RESULTS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Faculty teams review all data to guide recommendations for improvements to student learning, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They prioritize recommendations and next steps

 (summer).

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Participating faculty members determine assignments, map and review rubrics and achievement benchmarks, and then assess outcomes in courses

(fall and spring).

**ANALYSIS & USE OF RESULTS**

Faculty review initial course results and recommend improvements to curriculum, instruction, or assessment practices to improve student learning (end of semester).

**DATA COLLECTION**

Faculty apply the university rubric to designated assignments and collect course-level data on the achievement of the student learning of the outcomes

(during course).

Appendix D: Gen Ed Outcomes and Assessment Schedule

