



Assessing the General Education/ Core Competencies at NOVA

**Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success Initiatives
Northern Virginia Community College**

Fall 2018



Overview of Presentation

- I. Context for General Education/Core Learning Assessment at NOVA**
- II. SACSCOC and General Education Assessment**
- III. SCHEV/ VCCS and General Education Assessment**
- IV. Benchmarking Core Competency Assessment Methods**
- V. Resources**



Part I:

Context for General Education/ Core Learning Assessment at NOVA



Assessment is Part of Teaching and Learning

“Assessing student learning is not a new technique; it is an integral part of the job when it comes to evaluating student work.” Now the process, however, “involves more explicit and purposeful activities with respect to work that faculty have always done.”

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 2007



Assessment is Important

- **For Faculty-** For Knowledge and Improvement of Teaching Effectiveness
- **For Students-** To Improve Student Learning



Benefits of General Education Assessment to the Program

- To help students develop KSAs needed for further studies or career;
- To review learning at the program-level, not just at course-level.

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Benefits of General Education Assessment for the College

- To continuously improve
 - Student success (including graduation and student goal completion)
 - Programs
 - Teaching excellence



General Assessment is Important For Public Accountability-

Including **Employers, Students, and
Parents**

also required by SACSCOC, VCCS, and
SCHEV

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Part II:

SACSCOC and General Education Assessment

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SACS Accreditation for Public Accountability

- **SACSCOC is not the reason we assess.**
- **NOVA documents and makes our processes transparent for SACSCOC for public accountability.**
- **SACSCOC impacts NOVA's assessment timetable.**



SACSCOC Revised General Education Standard (previously 3.5.1) Student Achievement (Section 8)

Student learning and student success are at the core of the mission of all institutions of higher learning. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support student learning outcomes for its educational programs. To meet the goals of educational programs, an institution provides appropriate academic and student success services to support student success.



SACSCOC Revised General Education Standard (previously 3.5.1) Student Achievement (Section 8)

1. The institution **identifies, evaluates, and publishes** goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institutions mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution **uses multiple measures** to document student success.
(Core Requirement)



Student Achievement: Principle 8

2. The institution **identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of actively seeking improvement based on analysis of the results** in the areas below:

a. Student outcomes: educational programs- student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs (Formerly CS 3.3.1.1)

b. Student outcomes: general education- student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs (Formerly CS 3.5.1)

c. Student outcomes: academic and student services- academic and services that support student success



CS 3.5.1: Relevant Questions for Consideration

- What are the specific college-level competencies within the general education program?
- What evidence is available to show the extent to which students have attained these competencies?
- What evidence exists that demonstrates that the institution identifies competencies that are college-level?
- **What criteria does the institution use to set an acceptable benchmark for student attainment of competencies?**



SACS Reaffirmation Cycle

2010: Compliance Certification due to SACSCOC.

2011: SACSCOC on-site visit

2012: Recommendation from SACSCOC

- Not all programs assessing SLOs.
- Need for continuous improvement, regardless of target met.

2017: 5th year interim report due to SACSCOC

2022: Next Reaffirmation



Continued Progress

- SACSCOC expects us to have made progress since 2012 reaffirmation.
 - Making changes based on results
 - Assessing after changes were instituted
 - Analyzing recent results for evidence of improvements
 - i.e., Closing the Loop



Part III:

SCHEV/ VCCCS and General Education Assessment

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SCHEV General Education Assessment Policy Changes

Approved by Council Action July 18, 2017

- Each institution will assess student achievement in at least six competency areas, representing several different types of knowledge and/or skills.
- Four core competencies, determined by SCHEV, will be assessed by all institutions.
- Two competencies will be selected by the VCCS.



Four Core Competencies

1)Critical thinking – the ability to subject one’s own and others’ ideas, arguments, assumptions, and evidence to careful and logical scrutiny in order to make an informed judgment, draw a sound conclusion, or solve a problem.

2)Written communication – the ability to develop and communicate ideas effectively in writing as appropriate to a given context, purpose, and audience. It includes a variety of styles, genres, and media, including computer-mediated communications.



Four Core Competencies

3)Quantitative Reasoning – the ability to manipulate, analyze, and/or evaluate numbers and numerical data. It may involve calculation and/or analysis and interpretation of quantitative information derived from existing databases or systematic observations, and may be based in a variety of disciplines, not limited to mathematics and the natural and physical sciences.

4)Civic engagement – an array of knowledge, abilities, values, attitudes, and behaviors that in combination allow individuals to contribute to the civic life of their communities. It may include, among other things, exploration of one’s role and responsibilities in society; knowledge of and ability to engage with political systems and processes; and/or course-based or extra-curricular efforts to identify and address issues of public or community concern.



VCCS General Education Task Force to Determine Two Core Competencies

by February 21, 2018 ASAC Meeting

The charge is to:

1. Review existing General Education outcomes and make adjustments as needed.
2. Determine the 2 additional General Education outcomes for the VCCS system
3. Determine the minimum reporting structure and template to provide VCCS colleges.



Part IV:

Benchmarking General Education Assessment Methods



Assessment Goal for NOVA

To complete a cycle of at least 2 years reports for each competency, including the two that will be chosen by VCCS, in order to demonstrate to SASCO and SCHEV that NOVA “assesses the extent to which students achieve these outcomes, and provides evidence of actively seeking improvement based on analysis of the results” by our Reaffirmation in 2022.



Beginning by Benchmarking What We Currently Do at NOVA First

2017-18

Critical Thinking & Quantitative Reasoning

2018-19

Civic Engagement & Written Communication



General Education Assessment Proposal: 2017-2018

Critical Thinking & Quantitative Reasoning

1. Programs and disciplines will assess two SLOs in the Fall 2017, as usual.
2. Then just one SLO along with benchmarking one Core Competency, either Critical Thinking or Quantitative Reasoning in Spring 2018 , instead of the usual 2 SLOs.
3. The Core Competency will then be analyzed and reported in the APER format with the other SLOs in September 2018.



Best Practice

SMART Learning Goals

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**ttainable
- **R**esults-Focused
- **T**ime-Focused



NOVA's 7 General Education Goals

- **Communication**: Students will demonstrate the ability to interact with others, resulting in understanding and being understood.
- **Critical Thinking**: Students will demonstrate the ability to evaluate evidence carefully and apply reasoning to decide what to believe and how to act.
- **Cultural and Social Understanding**: Students will demonstrate an awareness, understanding and appreciation of the interconnectedness of the social and cultural dimensions within and across local, regional, state, national and global communities.



NOVA's 7 General Education Goals

- **Information Literacy:** Students will demonstrate the ability to recognize when information is needed and will have the ability to locate, evaluate and use it effectively.
- **Personal Development:** Students will demonstrate the ability to develop and/or refine personal wellness goals. Students will demonstrate the ability to develop and/or enhance the knowledge, skills, and understanding to make informed academic, social, personal, career and interpersonal decisions.



NOVA's 7 General Education Goals

- **Quantitative Reasoning:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use numerical, geometric, and measurement data and concepts, mathematical skills, and principles of mathematical reasoning to draw logical conclusions and to make well-reasoned decisions and possess the skills and knowledge necessary to apply the use of logic, numbers and mathematics to deal effectively with common problems and issues.
- **Scientific Reasoning:** Students will demonstrate the ability to adhere to a self-correcting system of inquiry (the scientific method) and rely on empirical evidence to describe, understand, predict and control natural phenomena.



NOVA's 7 General Education Goals

The Curriculum Committee has recommended that each program awarding a degree or certificate would be required to devise program-specific general education objectives. This approach to general education recognizes that student attainment of the general education goals of the college is achieved within the context of academic degree programs. The general education goals and program goals may overlap. Assessment of general education is most effective when embedded in program courses. In addition, the VCCS requires that general education be evaluated within the context of academic programs.

<http://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/NOVAGoals.html>



How Should We Assess?

- APPROPRIATE METHODS
 - Are “diagnostic” and allow programs to determine strengths and areas for improvement
 - Provide actionable information to improve student learning
 - Overall grade does not provide these.





Best Practice

- **ACTIONS for Improvement**
 - **Actions based on results**
 - **Re-assess after actions taken**
 - **Compare to find evidence of improved student learning**
 - **New actions for continuous improvement based on most recent results**



Examples of Core Learning Assessment

Most common approach:

Faculty and programs assess general education courses with rubrics, e-portfolios, general education exams, and course surveys.



Core Learning Assessment: Rubrics

Rubrics should separate the learning outcome into several proficiencies.

For example

NOVA General Education Goal 2:

Critical Thinking

A competent critical thinker evaluates evidence carefully and applies reasoning to decide what to believe and how to act.



Critical Thinking Proficiencies

Students will demonstrate the ability to

1. discriminate among degrees of credibility, accuracy, and reliability of inferences drawn

from given data;

2. recognize parallels, assumptions, or presuppositions in any given source of information;

3. evaluate the strengths and relevance of arguments on a particular question or issue;

4. weigh evidence and decide if generalizations or conclusions based on the given data are warranted;

5. determine whether certain conclusions or consequences are supported by the information provided; and

6. use problem solving skills.



Guiding Principles of the MSC

1. Any system of assessment should help build and support a culture of student learning that allows for assessment results to be used by each campus and by larger public systems for improving student learning and for program improvement.



Critical Thinking Rubrics/MSC

Example:

UNCW has adopted an approach to assessing learning goals that uses assignments that are a regular part of the course content. One strength of this approach is that the student work products are an authentic part of the curriculum, and hence there is a natural alignment often missing in standardized assessments.

<http://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/VALUE/uncw.pdf>

<http://www.aacu.org/value/casestudies>



Standalone Student Learning Outcomes

Example: Eastern Florida State College

Designed their core abilities

to provide a skill set apply throughout the academic experience, whether in the general education program, bachelors and associate degree programs, or career and technical programs.



Aligned Student Learning Outcomes

Example: Dickinson State

Gen Ed Requirement

**Communication and
Technology**

**Natural Sciences and
Mathematics**

**Expressions of Human
Civilizations**

Gen Ed Learning Outcomes

- Critical Thinking
- Communication and Technology

- Critical Thinking
- Communication and Technology
- Health and Wellness

- Critical Thinking
- Global Awareness
- Aesthetic Appreciation



Integrate Co-curricular Learning into General Education

Example: University of South Carolina-Aiken

integrates co-curricular learning into general education programs through an experiential learning requirement to reinforce the holistic mission of the general education program.

Students complete this requirement through study abroad, internships, service learning courses, faculty-mentored research, or a capstone course.



Resources

- **SACSCOC Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation**
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Resource%20Manual.pdf>
- **The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees**
<http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Quality%20and%20Integrity%20of%20Undergraduate%20Degrees.pdf>
- **NOVA's General Education Goals**
<https://www.nvcc.edu/curcatalog/general/goals.html>
- **MSC: Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment**
<http://www.sheeo.org/projects/msc-multi-state-collaborative-advance-learning-outcomes-assessment#Which%20states%20are%20involved>
- <http://www.sheeo.org/msc-pilot-study-results>
- **Benchmarking General Education Programs (EAB)**
<http://www.shawnee.edu/academics/GEP-essential-learning-outcomes/media/Benchmarking-General-Education-Programs.pdf>
- **Values Rubrics Case Studies (AAC&U)**
<http://www.aacu.org/value/casestudies>



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