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Assessment of Institutional Student Learning Outcomes and General Education

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Definitions





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Definitions

- Institutional Student Learning Outcomes:
Required of all students except those in certificate programs. May be the same as MSCHE gen ed, but may also include additional disciplines or competencies. (Sustainability is an example of this.)

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Definitions

- Institutional Goals: Strategic Goals for the institution. May or may not include student learning. Example: Review institutional policies, processes, and procedures to increase access to adult learners.

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Definitions

- MSCHE General Education:
 - quantitative and scientific reasoning
 - oral and written communication
 - critical analysis and reasoning
 - technological competency
 - information literacy
 - global awareness and cultural sensitivity.
- Values, ethics and diverse perspectives are included consistent with mission.
- Required of all students except those in certificate programs.
- Must be mapped and assessed.
- No minimum credit requirement.



Definitions

- SUNY General Education: 7/10 Categories, two competencies, and 30 credits in AA and AS degrees, and in baccalaureate degrees in the first two years of study.
- Does not require scientific reasoning.
- Does not require values, ethics, or diverse perspectives.
- Does not require global awareness and cultural sensitivity.
- Does not require SUNY GER of all degree programs.
- All but the last may be met under the current GER structure with some adjustments



Definitions

- Program Learning Outcomes: after completing the academic program, students should be able to demonstrate these outcomes and competencies.
- Program Outcomes: Typically include completion data such as graduation rates and placement rates. The government includes such factors as loan default rates as well.



Definitions

Core Values

- May reflect institutional goals which are not student learning goals, depending on institutional mission.
- For example:
Sustainability as a core value may be reflected in the physical plant, via recycling, solar energy, etc. without necessarily being included as a learning outcome in all degree programs.

ISLOs: Sources in the standards

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Institutional Student Learning Outcomes

These are not new requirements, as they were part of the previous standards.

Current wording:

Standard V:

“Clearly stated educational goals at the institution and degree/program levels which are interrelated with one another, with relevant educational experiences, and with the institution’s mission.”

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes

Standard I: Mission and Goals

1. clearly defined mission and goals that...
 - d. guide faculty, administration, staff, and governing structures in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curricular development, and the definition of institutional and educational outcomes;
3. goals that focus on student learning and related outcomes and on institutional improvement... and are consistent with institutional mission;



Standard V: Assessment

2. organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, **evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals**. Institutions should:

a. define meaningful curricular goals with defensible standards for evaluating whether students are achieving those goals;

n.b. “defensible standards” means that other professionals in the discipline might reasonably expect to find that the assessment process yields a realistic and valid understanding of student learning. For example, does a single multiple choice question yield credible, meaningful results (i.e. does it pass the “sniff test”)?



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Challenges

1. Connecting the dots among all SLOs and Goals
2. Ensuring that assessment results for student learning are also used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels.

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Assessment of ISLOs and General Education

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SUNY General Education Requirement (SUNY GER): Policy Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

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SUNY GER Yesterday

SUNY Board Established University-wide GER requirement for all students graduating with a Baccalaureate degree

- 1998 Original Board Resolution
- Required 30 credits, 10 knowledge areas, 2 competencies

Implementation:

Provost's Advisory Task Force on General Education

- Faculty groups developed SLOs for each knowledge area and competency

MTP 99-3 PACGE

- Campuses submitted their gen ed programs for approval

MTP 03-1 ACGE

- Reviewing and advising on implementation



SUNY GER Today

MTP 10-1

- Required 30 credits of gen ed
- Required Basic Communication and Mathematics for all GER programs
- Required 5 of remaining 8 categories
- Required 2 competencies
- Changed Assessment requirement to include SUNY GER learning outcomes, and meet or exceed MSCHE assessment standards
- Requests campuses to waive local or programmatic requirements for transfer students who complete the 30 credit SUNY GER, or who have met a SUNY GER area comparable to such a requirement.



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SUNY GER Today

MTP 13-1 Seamless Transfer

- All A.A., A.S., and bachelor's degree designed to enable students to complete 7 of 10 SUNY-GER areas (including mathematics and basic communication), two competency areas, and 30 credits of SUNY-GER courses within the first two years of full-time study of the program (or 60 credits, whichever is greater).
- Local general education requirements beyond the SUNY-GER shall not require a transfer student to exceed the number of credits to graduation required of native students in the same program.
- If a SUNY sending institution certifies that a student has completed the SUNY-GER, then the receiving institution must accept that requirement as being met.



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SUNY GER Tomorrow ???



Middle States General Education

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MSCHE General Education Expectations

Standard III:

at institutions that offer undergraduate education, a general education program, freestanding or integrated into academic disciplines that:

a. offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field;

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MSCHE General Education cont'd

Standard III:

b. offers a curriculum designed so that students **acquire and demonstrate** essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives.”

For graduate and professional education (new and current standards), “**opportunities** for the development of research, scholarship, and independent thinking...” are required.

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The Expectations

- 15 credits of gen ed for associate degrees, 30 credits for baccalaureate degrees, **or the equivalent.** (New standards do not include credit amounts.)
- It is not necessary for gen ed to be delivered within programs or courses; alternative methods of delivery are permissible.
- You have to be able to demonstrate how all students are able to obtain instruction in these outcomes. You must also be able to assess them. Curriculum maps should demonstrate how all students access these and how they are assessed. **This is about program design and not student choice.**
- Program learning outcomes are not the same as general education outcomes or ISLOs. They may be limited to programs only.
- Certificate programs are not included in this expectation.

SUNY vs MSCHE GER

SUNY GER Categories	MSCHE Categories which will be met
Basic Communication (Written and Oral)	Written and Oral Communication
Mathematics	Quantitative Reasoning
Critical Thinking	Critical Analysis and Reasoning
Information Management	Information Literacy
SUNY GER Categories	MSCHE Categories which may be met
Natural Science	Scientific Reasoning
Social Science	Scientific Reasoning, Diverse Perspectives
American History	Diverse perspectives
Western Civilization	Global Awareness, Cultural Sensitivity
Other World Civilizations	Diverse Perspectives, Global Awareness, Cultural Sensitivity
Foreign Language	Values, Ethics, Diverse Perspectives, Global Awareness, Cultural Sensitivity
Humanities	Values, Ethics, Diverse Perspectives, Global Awareness, Cultural Sensitivity
The Arts	Diverse Perspectives, Global Awareness, Cultural Sensitivity
Basic Communication	Technological Competency
Information Management	Technological Competency



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Assessment

Expectations are for a “mature” assessment program

- Curricular offerings must be assessed consistently **regardless of level, location or modality.**
- General education and/or ISLOs must also be assessed, whether they are delivered within courses or in an extracurricular or co-curricular manner. In this case, mapping is especially important.
- **There must be evidence of results being used to improve teaching and learning (assessment spiral).**





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Observations

- Some programs may require re-designation or restriction of electives to specify particular courses which meet the needed outcomes.
- Many courses may meet only one of the objectives under a particular ISLO. This would need to be specified so that the full range of objectives under an ISLO may be addressed and assessed.
- Some courses may need to add specific SLOs in order to demonstrate that the courses do address the topic in question. You can't just assume.

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Observations

- When additional learning outcomes need to be added to meet Middle States GER, consider integrating content, rather than adding courses.
- In the case of AOS degrees, all GER content must be integrated since these degrees by regulation cannot contain liberal arts courses.
- In some cases where a choice of courses is indicated, you should check to ensure that any ISLO met by one course is met by the other(s) as well if this is the only place that the ISLO is addressed in the program.
- Some indication in the map should be made to determine in which courses or in which alternative manner the ISLOs will be assessed.



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Other Issues/Questions

Q: Is it OK just to use categories instead of actual outcomes? It seems like it would be easier.

A: No. Categories are not student learning outcomes. You won't have valid assessment results.

Q: Don't service areas need learning outcomes now? Wouldn't this help with co-curricular ISLO assessment?

A: Some service areas such as those directly dealing with students such as advising, academic support, student development generally, student government, are being held accountable for student learning outcomes. In these cases, determining how **ALL** students access these outcomes is the issue. You may not want these to be the only way in which students access specific outcomes.



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Is it worth the effort?

It's a lot of work:

- The processes are complex and labor intensive.
- The more complicated and extensive the list of ISLOs, the more challenging the mapping process will be.
- It's likely that turf issues will arise, especially in cases where choices have to be limited in order to meet the ISLOs.

On the other hand:

- The institution may get clarity on value added.
- Gaps will emerge which are important to address.
- The discussions are valuable for clarifying institutional mission.
- The connections to resource allocation may yield needed funding.
- You can assess the assessment and make changes if the process is too labor intensive.
- You probably get to remain accredited.

Discussion

