

## **General Education Assessment Plan**

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Approved by the General Education Committee on May 10, 2019

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## **General Education Assessment Plan**

### **Preamble**

The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s (UHM) General Education Office (GEO) and General Education Committee (GEC) are committed to the assessment of student achievement of the General Education (Gen Ed) learning outcomes. The Gen Ed outcomes describe the knowledge, skills, and competencies that all UHM undergraduates should attain regardless of major in support of UHM’s mission of providing a “flexible and diverse multidisciplinary curriculum” (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2019, General Education Goals para. 2). These outcomes are currently achieved through courses that have received Gen Ed Foundations, Diversification and Focus designations. This document describes a proposed plan for assessing the Gen Ed Program that aims to be “meaningful, manageable and sustainable” (Allen, 2006, p. 18). The document describes a continual process of collecting data on student outcomes, evaluation of these data, and a procedure for recommending responses by the GEO and UHM faculty. These assessment activities are essential for enabling the UHM Gen Ed Program to continuously improve while adapting to changing learning needs and educational approaches.

### **I. Background and Motivation**

Ongoing assessment is an integral process in UHM Gen Ed Faculty boards and the General Education Committee (GEC) review course proposals to ensure Gen Ed Hallmarks are met and learning outcomes are addressed in submitted proposals. However, a learning assessment process and timeline for Gen Ed has not yet been formalized. The Gen Ed Program underwent External and Internal Reviews in AY 2017-2018. Both reviews emphasized the necessity for a Gen Ed assessment plan. The Internal Review recommended an assessment plan that answers the following questions: (1) Does data currently exist and/or does it need to be collected?, and (2) How will the data be used to improve the program and who is responsible for implementing the findings? The External Review recommended a comprehensive, program assessment plan to measure student learning with direct assessments coming from class assignments, projects, and other summative measures. Additionally, the UHM’s Faculty Senate (UHMFS) recognized the importance of Gen Ed curriculum assessment. In 2000, the UHMFS mandated the following:

- a stipulation that the Gen Ed program’s outcomes be periodically assessed;
- time limits on Gen Ed designations (no “forever” designations);
- faculty board review of course proposals and/or syllabi;
- a recommendation that the GEC establish an Assessment Working Group (AWG) (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2000).

In Spring 2019, the GEC Chair formed an AWG to create an assessment plan. The AWG is composed of several faculty committee members who have taught Gen Ed designated courses, come from diverse academic backgrounds, and have an interest in assessment of student learning. The GEO Assessment Coordinator also participates in the AWG as project leader to facilitate adherence to assessment best practices and ensure continuity as members of the GEC and Boards rotate on and off their respective committees.

## II. Transparency of Principles and Procedures of General Education Program Assessment<sup>1</sup>

Assessment of the Gen Ed Program will be used exclusively to determine the effectiveness of the General Education Program and guide efforts to improve student learning and adapt to changing learning needs. Assessment data or results will not be used to assess or evaluate, in any way, the performance of faculty members, departments, or other instructional units. The assessment of Gen Ed will not be used to assess or evaluate pedagogical practices used, or the ability of courses or programs to meet the discipline-specific learning objectives. The results will be used only in the aggregate and only to guide decisions by the GEO, GEC, and faculty about the Gen Ed program. All rights to intellectual property of faculty and students will be strictly honored as stated in the 2017-2021 University of Hawai‘i Professional Assembly BOR Contract Article XI Intellectual Property, Patents, and Copyrights (University of Hawai‘i Professional Assembly, 2017). To ensure that all assessment data and results are used appropriately only for assessing the Gen Ed Program, all information identifying departments, courses, instructors, and students will be kept confidential in perpetuity.

Gen Ed assessment will be a collaborative endeavor between the GEO, the GEC, and UHM faculty. Faculty members will participate in the selection of methods to gather evidence of student learning. They will be engaged in developing Gen Ed assessment questions and assignments. Faculty will also be involved in all stages of the interpretation of the data that are collected, as well as will have reasonable access to collected and / or archived assessment data. The UHM Gen Ed Program is committed to the following set of principles for the program and guidelines for use of assessment results.

### Principles of the Gen Ed Assessment program:

- 1) The Gen Ed assessment program strives to be systematic, comprehensive, unifying, ongoing, and based on evaluations of student learning.
- 2) Assessment strategies and activities are selected and developed to promote the mission of the Gen Ed program, increase institutional effectiveness, and enhance student learning and development.
- 3) Assessment requires clearly defined parameters and benchmarks for student performance for which educational and institutional outcomes can be measured.
- 4) Effective assessment is a collaborative effort and requires coordinated efforts both within and across departments, programs, units, and divisions.
- 5) Faculty have primary responsibility for developing and conducting learning outcomes assessment at the course and at the program level.
- 6) Assessment activities are conducted for program improvement; the results of assessment are not to be used in the evaluation of individual faculty or staff members. Faculty members who contribute assessment data from their courses will remain anonymous.

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the language in this section was adapted from the UHM GEO’s draft assessment preamble and Roanoke College’s statement on transparency in assessment.

Guidelines for the use of assessment data and results in making recommendations for changes to the Gen Ed Program:

- 1) Assessment results do not dictate decisions; professional judgment will be used to interpret assessment results and make appropriate recommendations for changes to the Gen Ed Program.
- 2) Recommendations are made using multiple sources of data.
- 3) An assessment result is not an end in itself.
- 4) Gen Ed program-level assessment results are not used for student course grades, individual faculty evaluation, or individual student evaluation.
- 5) Results are used fairly, ethically, and responsibly with a focus on student learning and specific learning objectives.
- 6) Should there be any recommendations for changes to students' Gen Ed requirements, the recommendations will be made to the UHM Faculty Senate via the GEC.

### **III. Roles of the Gen Ed Learning Assessment in the Comprehensive Program Review and WASC Accreditation**

#### **III.1 Comprehensive UHM Academic Program Review**

The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs/Provost (OVCAA) requires academic programs, which includes Gen Ed, to undergo a comprehensive program review process every five years (University Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2015). The assessments and processes detailed in the Gen Ed assessment plan will be incorporated into the program review for Gen Ed.

The next program review of General Education will be conducted in AY 2022-23. The OVCAA will work directly with the Chair of the GEC, Director of GEO, and Chair of the Program Review Steering Committee throughout the review process to ensure that all relevant parties remain fully informed. The review team will consist of both internal and external members who will be nominated by GEC and GEO and selected by the Provost. Team nominations are due Spring 2022. The self-study will be due to OVCAA in Fall 2022 and the site visit will take place in Spring 2023. The response to the external report will be followed by one- and three-year progress reports which will bridge the next review cycle.

#### **III.2 UHM Institutional Accreditation**

WASC requires institutions to “describe and provide evidence of how they assess students' achievement of core competencies” (WASC, 2014, p. 3). WASC allows institutions to determine how best to assess student learning but requires institutions to document this process, including the use of results. Data collected through Gen Ed assessment projects may be included in the institutional-level assessment of the WASC Core Competencies. The UHM Assessment Office and OVCAA will notify the GEO of needed information and data for reaffirmation.

#### IV. Gen Ed Assessment Process

Assessment is defined as “the ongoing process designed to monitor and improve student learning” (Allen, 2006, p. 1). Assessment of general education programs is similar to that of assessing academic programs. However, a major difference is that the Gen Ed learning assessment is overseen by interdisciplinary committees that include faculty from different academic departments and various disciplines who select the assessment approach, evaluate the information, and propose recommendations (Banta & Palomba, 2015).

The assessment of the Gen Ed curriculum will include the following areas: Global and Multicultural Perspectives; Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Issues; Critical Thinking; Contemporary Ethical Issues; Oral Communication; Quantitative Reasoning; Information Literacy; Foundations Written Communication; Focus Writing Intensives; and Diversification. Critical Thinking and Information Literacy are two of the five Core Competencies for WASC and their assessment is required for reaccreditation. In 2012, the UHMFS Critical Thinking Working Group recommended that Critical Thinking should be assessed through the Gen Ed curriculum (Mānoa Faculty Senate Critical Thinking Working Group, 2012). In 2013-14, the UHMFS Information Literacy Working Group (ILWG) recommended the GEC adopt a definition and standards for Information Literacy (Information Literacy Working Group, 2014). Both working groups’ final reports included literature reviews and working definitions that can be revisited during the Gen Ed assessment cycle.

Assessment of student learning within the Gen Ed curriculum will occur on a staggered multi-year cycle (see Appendix A for multi-year cycle).<sup>2</sup> It is possible to assess more than one Gen Ed area within a single project. For example, the assessment projects for Writing Intensive and Contemporary Ethical Issues could also be opportunities to collect artifacts for assessing Critical Thinking. Another example is Information Literacy can be assessed through Foundations Written Communication assignments. This will also allow for an outcome to be assessed more than once in a cycle. The assessment process for each component of the curriculum will occur over five semesters. Assessment as a process includes the following:

- Collaborative project planning
- Faculty professional development on teaching, learning, and assessment
- Collection and evaluation of student work
- Interpretation and discussion of the evaluation results
- Identification of strategies to enhance and maintain high levels of accomplishment and strategies to decrease any areas in which accomplishment is below expectations

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note collecting substantial data to assess student learning outcomes does not have to be labor intensive and cost prohibitive. It is not necessary to collect data from every student, every year to assess every learning outcome. Sampling principles can be utilized to select a demographically representative group of students that will provide sufficient data to draw conclusions. Triangulation and identifying consistent results among diverse samples can ensure confidence in the conclusions based on the collected data.

- Implement and monitor the strategies and their effectiveness in preparation for collaborative project planning

The planned cycle of student learning assessment allows the GEO to clarify what students should be able to accomplish, how well students are accomplishing the outcomes, and how the Gen Ed program can be improved to prepare students for their lives, careers, and future learning.

#### IV.1 Procedure for Obtaining, Evaluating, and Interpreting Student Learning Evidence

1. The semester prior to the start of the assessment project, the Gen Ed AWG and Gen Ed Assessment Coordinator notify the GEO, GEC, and relevant Board of the curriculum component to be assessed.
2. The Assessment Coordinator and AWG review course syllabi associated with that curricular component. Relevant courses are then selected to participate, and the faculty teaching these courses will be asked to participate as a university service activity. The Assessment Coordinator provides any assistance needed by the participating faculty.
3. From the selected courses, pre-existing class activities and assignments that directly relate to one or more of the student learning outcomes of the Gen Ed curriculum are identified. These are embedded indicators, also known as direct measures. In addition, the Assessment Coordinator and AWG will determine if student perceptions via surveys or interviews are available or needed as an indirect measure of learning. If needed, the Assessment Coordinator and AWG work with the faculty members to design and implement these.

*Table 1.* An example of the alignment of a Gen Ed goal, outcome and measures of student learning. See Appendix C for further examples of direct and indirect measures.

<b>Example</b>	
Foundation: Global and Multicultural Perspectives (FG)	
Learning Goal	Global and Multicultural Perspectives courses provide thematic treatments of global processes and cross-cultural interactions from a variety of perspectives. Students will trace human development from prehistory to modern time through examination of narratives and artifacts from diverse cultures. At least one component of each of these courses will involve the Indigenous cultures of Hawai‘i, the Pacific, and Asia.
Outcome statement	Students who achieve this goal can: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate knowledge of human societies, cultural traditions, and foundational historical events;</li> <li>2. Explain how cross-cultural contact contributes to the formation and change of culture;</li> <li>3. Compare and contrast selected perspectives and cultures in different geographies and from different historical eras;</li> </ol>



	<p>4. Analyze cultural, economic, political, scientific, and/or social trends across a broad scale of time; and</p> <p>5. Interpret and analyze primary source materials in relation to the social, economic, political, scientific and/or aesthetic values of its place of origin.</p>
Artifact collection	Student artifacts that have the potential to measure attainment of at least one of the five FG learning outcomes will be collected from a selection of 15 courses.
Direct measure	Embedded indicator: cross-cultural paper or signature assignment in eight courses.
Indirect measure	Student perception survey: student ratings of the knowledge, skills and reflection of what they have learned.

4. An appropriate sample will be determined by the number of students taking relevant courses, i.e., the student population being sampled. These samples are submitted by the contributing faculty members to the GEO.
5. The Assessment Coordinator and GEO Director facilitate the formation of a faculty advisory committee. A faculty advisory committee is composed of volunteering faculty with expertise in the disciplines represented by the assessment sample. The comprehensive data set (composed of both direct and indirect evidence) is provided to the faculty learning communities to score the student artifacts using a rubric, analyze and interpret the data. They then produce a document of their findings.
6. The Assessment Coordinator and GEO Director compile the documents by the learning communities and prepare a report describing the assessment data collection activities, the analyses of the data, the strengths of the outcomes, and areas needing improvement. The aggregated results will be distributed to all faculty members who participate, as well as the GEC and the appropriate Gen Ed Board. Results may be disaggregated based on student characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity), if the sample is large enough and representative, under the condition that students' identity will not be revealed through the disaggregation. Further, results will not identify faculty who participated in the assessment. The report will also be posted on the GEO website for the campus community and others to view.
7. The assessment report will include recommendations regarding adjustments to requirements, hallmarks, and learning objectives, pedagogical support, and policies and procedures of Gen Ed.
8. The GEC, GEO and Gen Ed Board create an action plan to track agreed-upon changes to the Gen Ed program. The Assessment Coordinator tracks and documents the progress on behalf of these parties.

9. The faculty members who participated in the assessment as well as their department chairs will receive a letter from the GEO acknowledging and thanking them for the service they provided in the assessment project.
10. The GEO and Assessment Coordinator will collaborate with various units (OVCAA, Assessment Office, Center for Teaching and Learning, Faculty Senate, etc.) across campus to provide professional development opportunities for faculty to improve the teaching of Gen Ed knowledge and skills. This will allow the GEC to “close the loop.” The professional development opportunities will include the following: workshops on effective assessment of student learning, instructional development necessitated by changes to the Gen Ed curriculum or learning outcomes, and action research projects intended to provide further information on student learning and to improve student learning over time.

## **IV.2 Disciplinary**

Evidence of student learning in the Gen Ed-designated courses will be collected. The GEO and GEC recognize that there are disciplinary differences in how faculty teach content within the same Gen Ed designated area. In creating assessments of the Gen Ed areas, disciplinaryity will be considered: “Disciplinaryity must be central to assessment, allowing faculty to operate where they are most comfortable and to bring their field’s distinctive questions, methods, and ways of thinking to the task of improving their students’ learning” (Kuh et al., 2015, p. 103). Gen Ed curriculum-wide assessment will be flexible and adaptive in how it is introduced to faculty. The AWG and Assessment Coordinator will consider offering measurement options that can be tailored to various disciplinary contexts.

## **IV.3 Ethical Practices for Gen Ed Assessment**

Assessment results will be used fairly, ethically, and responsibly for facilitating conversation between faculty and the GEO/GEC to determine ways to improve student learning across the Gen Ed curriculum, and for the GEC and GEO to make judgements about the effectiveness of the Gen Ed program and recommendations for its improvement. Ethical assessment occurs when factors such as anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy are respected (Allen, 2004). Several steps that the GEO and GEC will take to ensure assessments are conducted ethically are:

- The GEO will provide resources on collecting, sharing, and using Gen Ed assessment data fairly, ethically, and responsibly. For example, suggested resources can be ethical standards developed by professional organizations that focus on assessment, such as the National Council on Measurement in Education (1995) as well as the National Research Council (1993). The resources can serve as guidelines of best practices for the GEC, GEO, AWG, and faculty.

- The GEO will follow the UHM Campus Policy regarding Collection of Student Work for Assessment Purposes (UHM, 2019). Students should be informed of the nature, purpose, and results of an assessment project. Faculty participating in a Gen Ed assessment will inform their students in advance that (1) a random sampling of student artifacts will be conducted and their assignment may be selected in the random sample, (2) identifiable information will be removed, and, (3) the aggregated results will be shared in an assessment report and posted on the GEO website.
- Students and faculty will not be identified in connection with the assessment data and reports to ensure anonymity. All personal identifying information will be stripped either prior to or immediately upon the collection of samples. No analyses will be conducted until all samples and evidence have been “blinded.”
- Students have the right to determine what personal information they choose to disclose in assessment projects in order to protect their privacy. Students may be allowed to agree or disagree to sharing information for the purpose of the assessment.
- The Assessment Coordinator and AWG will follow UHM policies concerning data management best practices and data security measures stated in UH Executive Policy E2.215: "Institutional Data Governance" (UHM, 2018a). Additionally, the Assessment Coordinator will follow UHM ITS policies (UHM, 2018b) on securing a computer with sensitive data.
- Data will be presented in an engaging format with practical applications for improving learning. Appendix D shows an example of a process for sharing data with the campus.
- The Assessment Coordinator will be responsible for archiving the Gen Ed assessment data. The Assessment Coordinator will follow UH data protection and governance procedures (UHM, 2018a). Copies of the data will be stored in its original format and in PDF on the GEO website and GEO Google Drive. Additionally, hard copies will be stored in the GEO.

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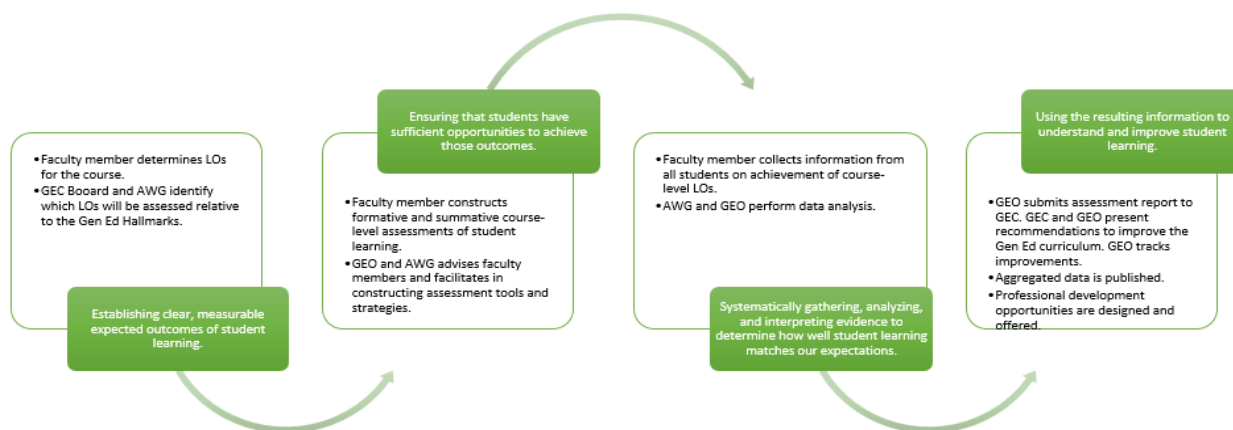
## VI. Appendices

### A. General Education Assessment Cycle

GE Assessment	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Global and Multicultural Perspectives (FG)														
Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Issues (HAP)														
Diversification														
Critical Thinking														
Contemporary Ethical Issues (E)														
Oral Communication (O)														
Quantitative Reasoning (FQ)														
Information Literacy														
Foundations Written Communication (FW)														
Focus Writing Intensives (W/WI)														
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GEO plans assessment in conjunction with appropriate GE board.</li> </ul>													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty professional development is offered to prepare faculty for assessment.</li> </ul>													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructors teach courses. Artifacts are collected for the GEO.</li> </ul>													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artifacts are assessed. Assessment coordinator aggregates findings and prepares report for GEC.</li> </ul>													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss results with appropriate GE board. GEC makes recommendations to improve curriculum through faculty governance. Action plan is created. Instructors incorporate changes to support the GEO.</li> </ul>													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing teaching and faculty professional development offered.</li> </ul>													

Note: On October 29, 2020, the General Education Committee approved for the assessment of Diversification to occur earlier in the schedule. The Diversification assessment project start date was changed from Spring 2024 to Fall 2020. The change was made to provide assessment data on Diversification for accreditation purposes.

### B. Responsibilities of Faculty and the GEO in the Assessment Process (Adapted from Suskie (2009))



### **C. Sources of Evidence for the Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

An adequate collection of evidence is necessary in order to judge whether students have met the learning outcomes. The collection of evidence should convey where the learning outcomes are effectively being achieved and where there is weakness in the achievement of the learning outcomes. To reach well-informed judgements derived from student outcome data, both direct and indirect data evidence should be collected. The method of triangulation in assessment provides substantial evidence to support conclusions and recommendations. The following examples are from Suskie (2009).

#### **Examples of Evidence of Student Learning**

*C = evidence suitable for course-level as well as program-level student learning*

##### **Direct (Clear and Compelling) Evidence of What Students Are Learning**

- Ratings of student skills by field experience supervisors
- Scores and pass rates on appropriate licensure/ certification exams (e.g., Praxis, NLN) or other published tests (e.g., Major Field Tests) that assess key learning outcomes
- “Capstone” experiences such as research projects, presentations, theses, dissertations, oral defenses, exhibitions, or performances, scored using a rubric
- Other written work, performances, or presentations, scored using a rubric (C)
- Portfolios of student work (C)
- Scores on locally-designed multiple choice and/or essay tests such as final examinations in key courses, qualifying examinations, and comprehensive examinations, accompanied by test “blueprints” describing what the tests assess (C)
- Score gains between entry and exit on published or local tests or writing samples (C)
- Employer ratings of employee skills
- Observations of student behavior (e.g., presentations, group discussions), undertaken systematically and with notes recorded systematically
- Summaries/analyses of electronic discussion threads (C)
- “Think-alouds” (C)
- Classroom response systems (clickers) (C)
- Knowledge maps (C)
- Feedback from computer simulated tasks (e.g., information on patterns of actions, decisions, branches) (C)
- Student reflections on their values, attitudes and beliefs, if developing those are intended outcomes of the course or program (C)

##### **Indirect Evidence of Student Learning**

*(Signs that Students Are Probably Learning, But Exactly What or How Much They Are Learning is Less Clear)*

- Course grades (C)
- Assignment grades, if not accompanied by a rubric or scoring guide (C)
- For four-year programs, admission rates into graduate programs and graduation rates from those programs

- For two-year programs, admission rates in four-year institutions and graduation rates from those institutions
- Quality/reputation of graduate and four-year programs into which alumni are accepted
- Placement rates of graduates into appropriate career positions and starting salaries
- Alumni perceptions of their career responsibilities and satisfaction
- Student ratings of their knowledge and skills and reflections on what they have learned in the course or program (C)
- Questions on end-of-course student evaluation forms that ask about the course rather than the instructor (C)
- Student/alumni satisfaction with their learning, collected through surveys, exit interviews, or focus groups
- Voluntary gifts from alumni and employers
- Student participation rates in faculty research, publications and conference presentations
- Honors, awards, and scholarships earned by students and alumni

**Evidence of Learning Processes that Promote Student Learning**  
*(Insights into Why Students Are or Aren't Learning)*

- Transcripts, catalog descriptions, and course syllabi, analyzed for evidence of course or program coherence, opportunities for active and collaborative learning, etc. (C)
- Logs maintained by students documenting time spent on course work, interactions with faculty and other students, nature and frequency of library use, etc. (C)
- Interviews and focus groups with students, asking why they achieve some learning goals well and other less well (C)
- Many of Angelo and Cross's Classroom Assessment Techniques (C)
- Counts of out-of-class interactions between faculty and students (C)
- Counts of programs that disseminate the program's major learning goals to all students in the program
- Counts of courses whose syllabi list the course's major learning goals
- Documentation of the match between course/program objectives and assessments (C)
- Counts of courses whose final grades are based at least in part on assessments of thinking skills as well as basic understanding
- Ratio of performance assessments to paper-and-pencil test (C)
- Proportions of class time spent in active learning (C)
- Counts of courses with collaborative learning opportunities
- Counts of courses taught using culturally responsive teaching techniques
- Counts of courses with service learning opportunities, or counts of student hours spent in service learning activities
- Library activity in the program's discipline(s) (e.g., number of books checked out; number of online database searches conducted; number of online journal articles accessed)
- Counts of student majors participating in relevant co-curricular activities (e.g., the percent of Biology majors participating in the Biology Club)
- Voluntary student attendance at disciplinary seminars and conferences and other intellectual/cultural events relevant to a course or program (C)



## D. Example of Effective Use of Student Learning Assessment Data

The Gen Ed office plans to share assessment results in meaningful ways that facilitate discussions and actions. The following process (Addy, Frederick, Molinaro, Ouellett, & Ross, 2019) for sharing data from the University of California Davis (UCD) can be utilized by the GEO to share information on Gen Ed assessment. UCD shares data through data dashboards. Specific topics that arise from discussions around the dashboards lead to the development of handouts on pedagogy, including bibliographies with suggested resources for further study.

