The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Indiana University Northwest

Project Details		
Title	Implementation of the new General Education Program - Assessment of Learning Outcomes	**Status** DRAFT
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	**Updated** 09-30-2013
Timeline		**Reviewed** 10-08-2013
	Planned Project Kickoff 08-01-2010	**Created** 03-30-2010
	Target Completion 06-30-2014	**Version** 4

1: Project Goal

A: Previous action projects, general education reform and centralization of outcome assessment, have now brought us to implementation of our revised General Education program and concurrently systematically assessing student achievement of learning outcomes. Now that our assessment infrastructure has been established, we will focus on assessment to both inform our efforts at promoting student success and as a mechanism for evaluation of the new curriculum. This effort will involve close coordination between the faculty General Education Committee, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the majors inside and outside the College.

2: Reasons For Project

A: General Education reform has taken about 4 years of concerted effort on campus. At the same time, we have been working hard to imbed centralized assessment of student learning outcomes into the culture and infrastructure of the campus. Our new General Education program will be implemented beginning in the fall 2010 for 2014 graduates. At the same time, the campus is focusing heavily on student retention as part of its enrollment initiative and in response to the state of Indiana's "Reaching Higher" initiative. Therefore, it is imperative that now, as we begin full-scale implementation of our new general education program that we make assessment of learning outcomes an integral part of that implementation. It is critical that we treat assessment of learning outcomes as a part of implementation of the new general education program at this opportune time so that assessment doesn't become an "add on." Also, there are bound to be unexpected difficulties or consequences of the new program and it is imperative that we collect, analyze and use data to fine tune the curriculum on an ongoing basis. Finally, a coherent program of assessment will require significant coordination between the College of Arts and Sciences and the majors both inside and outside the college. Developing this work as an action project has proven a successful way for IU Northwest to focus its efforts and maintain active discussion of the work.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: All academic units, the Faculty Organization General Education and Assessment Committee, and the office of Academic Affairs will be affected.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Assessment of student learning outcomes—we will be focusing on assessment as providing measures of both student success and program evaluation.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: Implementation of the general education program will take a full 4 years. By the end of this project, we will have refined our assessment infrastructure, gone through one complete admission cohort (for traditional students), and will have collected data that will inform evaluation. The faculty from all academic majors have identified for each major where assessment of general education learning outcomes will occur. Now it is time for the exact mechanisms to be described and implemented.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Success of this AP will be monitored by the Office of Academic Affairs (including the newly established Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research). Success will require 1). A standard process of evaluation of learning outcomes of foundational courses (Elementary Composition, Public Speaking, Mathematics, and a natural science with a laboratory) and using the results to suggest necessary improvements. This will be the responsibility of the General Education and Assessment Committee; 2). A method of monitoring and communicating assessment of learning outcomes in the Principle 2 Breadth of Leaning courses and centralized reporting of the results. This will primarily be the responsibility of the College of Arts and Science; and 3). A method of monitoring an communicating assessment of learning outcomes in the advanced foundation courses and leaning outcomes associated with Principle 3 through 5. This will primarily be the responsibility of the academic unit offering the major. The monitoring of these efforts will centralized in Academic Affairs and reported at least annually by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research.

7: **Project Outcome Measures**

A: Development, implementation, and communication of: 1) an established process by which the General Education and Assessment Committee conducts its assessment work related to leaning outcomes in foundations courses and uses that data for improvement; 2) an established process by which the College of Arts and Sciences manages assessment of Breadth of Leaning courses, uses the data for improvement and communicates the data to the larger campus faculty; and 1) an established process by which the academic majors (units) conduct assessment work related to leaning outcomes in advanced courses and in Principles 3-5, communicates the results, and uses the results for improvement.

Project Update

1: **Project Accomplishments and Status**

A: *Timeline for Assessment – 4-year General Education Cycle*
http://www.iun.edu/~nwacadem/academic/curriculum_processes/Program%20Review%202011-2017.pdf. This timeline integrates our General Education Assessment timeline with annual departmental assessment and accrediting body assessments (both campus and program) to provide an overall picture of our annual academic assessment schedule.

The timeline above indicates that our Principle 2 Breadth of Learning courses were to be evaluated in 2011-12. Letters were sent to Dean of College of Arts and Sciences detailing courses to be assessed for General Education, requesting plans for assessment by September 15, 2011 and final reports by April 2012. We have received 7 of the 11 reports on courses scheduled for evaluation. All of the units presented their results to the General Education/Assessment Committee and the Faculty Organization in the fall of 2012 and spring of 2013, as we did previously for our Principle 1 Foundations courses, and the results are posted here as soon as they are available. We are still waiting on 4 assessment reports – they have been given a final deadline of September 1, 2013 to submit reports.

The General Education/Assessment Committee met in early September 2012 to begin work on the 2012-13 General Education Assessment plan. We were scheduled to assess Principle 1 Advanced Foundations and Principle 4 Diversity. The committee requested data on the most commonly taken courses in these categories and decided to request assessments from Principle 1 Advanced Mathematical Reasoning (all 4 statistics courses taught here), Principle 1 Advanced Written Communication (Professional Writing Skills) and 4 courses in Principle 4 – Diversity in the Workplace, Developmental Issues and Health, Minority People in the U.S., and Introduction to Exceptional Children in the U.S. These reports are due in Academic Affairs on September 1, 2013. We are on target to complete our first full cycle of General Education assessment during AY 2013-14 as detailed in the timeline.

Additionally, the state of Indiana has developed a Statewide General Education Core. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs was the campus representative in this effort (ex-officio on the General Education/Assessment Committee). The General Education/Assessment Committee and subsequently the Faculty Organization spent considerable time mapping our General Education Program onto the Statewide General Education Core. In future years, there will a requirement for assessment reporting to the state, the details of which have yet to be determined.

As described in our last update, Indiana University and IU Northwest have become part of a study of student learning gains using the ETS Proficiency Profile in AY 2012-13. This multiple choice test assesses reading, critical thinking, writing mechanics, and math skills. The first set of results are provided below for entering freshman. They will be asked to take the test again in 4 years.

	Possible Range	Mean Score*	Standard Deviation**
Total Score	400 to 500	430.89 (435.77)	14.42 (7.76)
Skills Subscores:			
Critical Thinking	100 to 130	108.42 (109.45)	4.58 (1.96)
Reading	100 to 130	113.09 (115.17)	5.85 (62.59)
Writing	100 to 130	111.39 (112.64)	4.55 (41.81)
Mathematics	100 to 130	110.39 (111.56)	5.32 (2.05)

** IUN n=332; (Masters' Comprehensives I and II n=44,719)

2: **Institution Involvement**

A: Our answer to this question is largely the same as it was at our last update. This is a positive phenomenon, as I believe it indicates that we have progressed to a point where this assessment work has been integrated into our regular work cycle effectively.

After the General Education Principles were approved by the campus and revisions made to the curriculum of every degree, both the General Education/Assessment Committee and the Office of Academic Affairs continue to be instrumental in maintaining general awareness of the assessment process. Both entities have communicated extensively with the academic units, who in turn have communicated extensively with their faculty regarding these issues. The new 2012-14 (online and printed) Bulletin details the new

General Education Principles and requirements. Additionally the Office of Academic Affairs has communicated with the Library, Institutional Research and other core academic support areas regarding the project.

The Office of Academic Affairs funded a work-study student to assist with Assessment for the last several years and will continue to do so. This student enters de-identified data and performs simple analyses supervised by the home academic units.

The administration will again send the Chair of the General Education/Assessment Committee, the Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Institutional Effectiveness to the *Assessment Institute* to gather additional information to bring back to the campus on successful assessment projects. Any resources obtained at the Institute are cataloged, and the list is available on our Assessment page online and can be checked out by faculty as needed.

3: Next Steps

A: IU Northwest (along with all of the regional IU campuses) adopted *WEAVEonline* last year. This software application addresses the need to develop and maintain continuous improvement processes for both the academic and administrative structures within an institution of higher education. The Offices of Institutional Effectiveness and Research (OIER) and Academic Affairs have had the initial training for using WEAVE. We intend to use WEAVE to report General Education, Strategic Planning, Accreditation, and Annual Departmental Assessment results. To start, we have entered learning outcomes, departmental goals and assessment results for 2012 into the system. WEAVE has provided a template for reporting Departmental Assessment Results that we will use until training for Departments/Academic Units is complete. The OIER plans to develop a new Action Project around use of *WEAVEonline* for our assessment and planning needs.

Additionally, next year will be year 4 in the 4-year General Education cycle. We intend to complete the first round of assessment, and then have a small ½ day retreat for the General Education/Assessment Committee to evaluate what worked, what didn't and why and how we can improve the process for the next 4-year-cycle of assessment. At that time we believe we will be ready to retire this Action Project and take on new challenges.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: General Education Assessment is a common institutional practice. While our process is not, we believe, groundbreaking, it appears to be successful on our campus. We are using the same process we used in creating our General Education plan. We have broad representation from the academic units on the General Education/Assessment Committee, we have support from the Office of Academic Affairs for the process and we are moving forward at a pace that is comfortable for our campus. There is a division of responsibility, with the committee focusing more significantly on the foundational general education experiences, while the academic units themselves are creating and implementing the assessment measures for the breath of learning courses. This has increased the number of people directly involved in the process and engendered greater buy-in by the campus community. As a side note, this same process is being used successfully by a relatively new group on campus – the First Year Experience Taskforce, who are developing a plan for implementing an FYE course across the campus, indicating that at least for our campus this seems to be an effective practice.

Additionally, the Chancellor has asked that a report on General Education/Assessment be made annually at the Northwest Council, the central governance body for the discussion of significant issues facing the University. The first of these was made in December of 2012. This further institutionalizes the assessment process for the campus as well as providing a indicator of its importance.

In our retreat at the end of the next year of assessment, we will spend some time reflecting on our process and how to improve it and hope to add it to our "best practices" that we carry forward to other committees and tasks on campus.

5: Project Challenges

A: As this is a new experience for our campus (our first campus-wide General Education Principles and Assessment Plan) we feel like we are still feeling our way through the process. The General Education/Assessment Committee as well as the Office of Academic Affairs are excited about the implementation of the plan, but the increase in work for the academic units and individual faculty makes it not as appealing a process for all. I think this is our biggest challenge at this point. As you can see in our Project Accomplishments section, we do not have every assessment report that was due to date, and the ones we do have often required frequent reminders to receive. We continue to work to support both the individual academic units and faculty working on assessment with information, work-study assistance, and moral support along with encouragement that the results they gain are not just of use in improving the general education experience for our students but within their individual disciplines as well. The departments that have completed the assessment process understand the benefits, it is just convincing those about to undertake the process to go forward and assess that we will all continue to work on.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: **Accomplishments & Status**:

This is the fourth report submitted by Indiana University Northwest on its project on the "Implementation of the new General Education Program - Assessment of Learning Outcomes." The campus has tied this appropriately to Category 1, "Helping Students Learn." It also is closely aligned with Categories 7 and 8:

Category 7: Measuring Effectiveness

Category 8: Planning Continuous Improvement

IUN has developed an approach, deployed it to the academic departments, and has nine out of eleven links live as of the time of this review. The two areas listed, but with no report are "Principles of Sociology" and "Introduction to Cultural Anthropology." The reports reflect the thoughtful and diverse approaches to assessment of IUN's second General Education Principle:

"2. Breadth of Learning

Mastery of the core concepts, principles, and methods in arts and humanities, the social sciences, cultural and historical studies, and the mathematical, physical, and life sciences."

The units presented their results to the General Education/Assessment Committee and the Faculty Organization following the pattern used for Principle 1.

In addition, IUN reported the ETS Proficiency Profile results for 2012-2013 entering freshmen. The plan is to have these students complete the Profile in four years.

IUN reports that it is on course to receive reports for additional General Education Principles and complete General Education assessment on time in 2013-2014. IUN expects to retire the project in 2014.

IUN is making acceptable progress on this Action Project.

2: **Institution Involvement**

A:

The report and the links provide evidence that the academic departments and faculty are engaged in the process, with the possible exception of the two that have yet to submit their reports. IUN reports that the General Education/Assessment Committee, Office of Academic Affairs, Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Institutional Effectiveness, faculty, Library, and Institutional Research have been involved by being responsible or accountable for providing or reviewing data, being consulted on the project, or being informed. The campus has hired a work-study student to support the project through data entry. Students have participated by completing the artifacts that faculty have used in the assessment process. The public is informed through IUN's assessment website: http://www.iun.edu/campus-assessment/assessment-results/index.htm.

3: **Next Steps**

A: The Action Project is scheduled to be active through June 2014, after which it will be retired. Although the Project will be retired, IUN's assessment timeline shows that its assessment work will continue at least through 2017, the most distant year in the timeline.

The campus will be assessing additional General Education Principles in this, the Project's final year.

It is significant that Campus has added the standardized ETS Proficiency Profile. This may provide not only longitudinal data to compare incoming freshmen with their scores as seniors, but also information to allow IUN to benchmark its student's proficiency levels with others participating in the Profile. The absence of comparative data was evident in the reports on IUN's Assessment web page. As the cycle continues, there will be additional cycles of data for comparison.

4: **Resulting Effective Practices**

A: IUN's Action project shows evidence of the following effective practices:

Engagement: IUN shows evidence of high levels of faculty engagement.

Reflection on Assessment Results: Many of the reports contain evidence of faculty reflection on the meaning of the results. For example, Psychology found that timing of gathering assessment evidence was crucial to interpret the results.

Centralized Reporting, Report Retention, and Transparency: IUN's assessment web site provides transparency to the public and shows the University is willing to be accountable for its stated outcomes. Retaining documents in a publicly accessible repository that is available to the public is a best practice.

5: Project Challenges

A: IUN's Action Project report and the documents in the report's links show the following challenges:

Meeting Deadlines: Like many other institutions, IUN has experienced late or missed reporting deadlines. As the process matures and develops, and entities are accountable to the University and the public, this challenge will likely diminish. The University is aware of this problem and is working to obtain the reports that are missing.

Differentiating between Assessment and Grading: IUN shows evidence that some members of the assessment team are in the early stages of differentiating between Assessment of student learning outcomes and grading. Comments in reports and on sample rubrics reflect the more familiar pattern of evaluating student work, rather than using the artifacts to provide evidence to assess the degree to which program and General Education outcomes are being met.

Difficulty in Summarizing Overall Results: Another common challenge for institutions at early stages in the development of Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes is difficulty in summarizing the results from different assessment methods in different discipline areas. The assessment scales differ from unit to unit and pose challenges for interpretation. One approach that has been beneficial to some institutions is adopting shared language in assessment rubrics such as "highly proficient (accomplished), proficient, partially proficient, and not proficient." Shared language can be especially useful in summarizing complex assessment tasks that employ divergent methods such as IUN's General Education Principles.

Using Assessment Results for Improvement: Assessment is not only for accountability and reporting. It is also, and perhaps primarily, for improving. IUN publishes its results, demonstrating accountability. It is unclear, however, how some of the results will drive improvement. In some cases, the reports simply compare means and standard deviations. As IUN continues to develop its assessment process and has additional cycles of data to analyze, it will be important to use the information to support the campus' continuous quality improvement processes. Documenting how assessment data drives improvement in curriculum and student learning outcomes will provide strong evidence for IUN's efforts to meet HLC's Criterion 4. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement, and Criterion 5, Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness.

IUN's challenges are shared by many institutions at a similar stage in the development of Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. They are not unique to IUN. The University is aware of its challenges and is working to find solutions (such as continuing to participate in the Assessment Institute) that will serve the University and its stakeholders and students well.