

SUNY Learning Outcomes	SUNY Potsdam General Education Learning Outcomes
<p><b>Mathematics</b></p> <p>Students will demonstrate the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpret and draw inferences from mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables and schematics;</li> <li>• Represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally;</li> <li>• Employ quantitative methods such as, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, or statistics to solve problems;</li> <li>• Estimate and check mathematical results for reasonableness; and,</li> <li>• Recognize the limits of mathematical and statistical methods.</li> </ul>	<p><b>FM Mathematical</b></p> <p>Knowledge Area: Introduces quantitative methods and strengthens reasoning skills needed to respond with greater sophistication in a complex technological world.</p> <p>Students will show competence in the following quantitative reasoning skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- arithmetic;</li> <li>- algebra;</li> <li>- geometry;</li> <li>- data analysis; and</li> <li>- quantitative reasoning.</li> </ul> <p>Skills: Strengthen students' ability to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. collect, analyze, and interpret numerical data or information</li> <li>b. interpret and generate tables, graphs, and charts;</li> <li>c. understand that numerical data is open to multiple interpretations and that numbers are not "neutral" symbols.</li> <li>d. represent phenomena of the physical world in abstract, symbolic form;</li> <li>e. identify and use symbols and mathematical operations to algebraically represent a complex phenomenon of the physical world and to test the adequacy of the representation;</li> <li>f. use of abstract models to describe or explain phenomena, systems, or processes and to be aware that acceptance of a given model changes the perception of the physical world;</li> <li>g. estimate, approximate, and recognize the reasonableness of results;</li> <li>h. convert information into one or more formal notation systems and to manipulate elements within that notation system;</li> <li>i. understand logical and symbolic relationships;</li> <li>j. recognize appropriate and inappropriate uses of quantification and critically evaluate a number-based argument.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Natural Sciences</b></p> <p>Students will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of the methods scientists use to explore natural phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical analysis; and</li> </ul>	<p><b>SB/SP/LB Scientific Inquiry – Biological Sciences; Scientific Inquiry – Physical Sciences; Lab</b></p> <p>Studies natural phenomena in the physical and biological sciences empirically and systematically. One course must be selected from each of these two general knowledge areas. At least one course must have laboratory experiences (laboratories, computer simulations, field trips,</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application of scientific data, concepts, and models in one of the natural sciences.</li> </ul>	<p>demonstrations).</p> <p>The course must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce major scientific concepts;</li> <li>show that scientific investigation of a phenomenon progresses systematically with hypotheses, theories, and models being formed, challenged, defended, discarded, and revised;</li> <li>provide experience in forming and testing hypotheses;</li> <li>discuss limitations of a set of data and the possibility of alternative interpretations;</li> <li>distinguish causal and non-causal relationships;</li> <li>use quantitative measures, analyses, and models to present and evaluate data;</li> <li>suggest limits of scientific investigations and its impact upon society and human existence;</li> <li>distinguish between science and the application of scientific knowledge as exemplified in technology.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Social Sciences</b></p> <p>Students will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis; and</li> <li>• Knowledge of major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SA – Social Analysis</b></p> <p>Systematically studies human behavior, human social interactions and relations, and contemporary social institutions (those practices, conventions, groupings, and organizations which most significantly structure social life in the world today).</p> <p>The course must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce the historical and philosophical origins and scope (boundaries) of the discipline or subject and consider how the discipline is evolving within a changing society;</li> <li>illustrate and evaluate several methods of data collections, interpretation, and analysis including quantitative methods where appropriate;</li> <li>explore alternative theoretical frameworks and consider their ability to explain the observations in question;</li> <li>consider a contemporary social issue from the point-of-view of alternative theoretical frameworks and consider their utility for making public policy decisions.</li> </ol>
<p><b>American History</b></p> <p>Students will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social, and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society;</li> <li>• Knowledge of common institutions in American society and how</li> </ul>	<p><b>AH – American History</b></p> <p>Studies significant portions of the narrative of American History, focusing on the political, economic, social and cultural, including an examination of unity and diversity in American society. Attention must be paid to common institutions in American society and to how they have affected various groups, as well as, to developing an understanding of America's</p>

<p>they have affected different groups; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding of America’s evolving relationship with the rest of the world.</li> </ul>	<p>evolving relationship with the rest of the world.</p> <p>The course must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>examine at least one significant issue of unity and diversity in American society;</li> <li>examine common institutions in American society and their effects upon various groups within that society;</li> <li>examine some aspect of America's evolving relationship with the rest of the world;</li> <li>emphasize the process of identifying, selecting, and interpreting historical data;</li> <li>stress a sense of history by suggesting continuities and discontinuities in the development of the topic under study;</li> <li>introduce students to the use of primary sources;</li> <li>include written and/or spoken exercises which demonstrate an understanding of the issues and methodologies laid out in the preceding criteria.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Western Civilizations</b></p> <p>Students will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of the development of the distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society culture, etc., of Western civilization; and</li> <li>• Relate the development of Western civilization to that of other regions of the world.</li> </ul>	<p><b>WC - Western Civilization</b></p> <p>The developmental study of significant aspects of Western Civilization, defined as any civilization constitutive of or derived primarily from European Civilization.</p> <p>The course must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take as primary subject the historical development of some significant theme or aspect of Western Civilization, excluding the U.S.;</li> <li>examine the development of the distinctive features of that theme or aspect, placing them into the broader context of the development of Western Civilization;</li> <li>relate the development of the theme or aspect to that of other regions of the world;</li> <li>stress a sense of history by suggesting continuities and discontinuities in the development of the theme or aspect under study;</li> <li>provide experience in the critical use of primary sources and the evaluation of evidence whenever possible;</li> <li>include discussion of the nature of historical inquiry and the limitation of scholarly authority;</li> <li>include written or spoken exercises which demonstrate an understanding of the issues and methodologies laid out in the preceding criteria.</li> </ol> <p>NB: The WC mode requirement may double count with other Modes of Inquiry courses except AH and XC.</p>

<p><b>Other World Civilizations</b> Students will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of either a broad outline of world history, or</li> <li>• The distinctive features of the history, institutions, economy, society, culture, etc., of one non-Western Civilization.</li> </ul>	<p><b>XC – Cross Cultural Perspective</b> The comparative, holistic study of a people or peoples or ways of life not derived primarily from European civilization (hereafter, "the examined group,") such as the societies, civilizations, or cultural traditions originating in Africa, Asia, Oceania, or the Americas. The course must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>devote a majority of reading and class time to the study of the examined group;</li> <li>attend to the interconnections of several significant aspects of the examined group such as the political, historical, artistic, ideological, economic, technological;</li> <li>compare and contrast the examined group with other cultures;</li> <li>study the interaction of the examined group with other cultures;</li> <li>confront the problems raised by ethnocentrism and cultural relativism, and/or the tensions between nationalism and globalism;</li> <li>include written or spoken exercises about the examined group which demonstrate an understanding of the issues and methodologies identified in the preceding criteria.</li> </ol> <p>NB: The XC requirement may double count with other General Education designators and Modes of Inquiry except AH and WC.</p>
<p><b>Humanities</b> Students will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities in addition to those encompassed by other knowledge areas required by the General Education program.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PI – Philosophical Inquiry</b> Engages in critical and systematic reflection on the root nature of a subject matter in a way that explores the most basic questions about it. The course must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concentrate on and be primarily devoted to critical and systematic reflection upon one or more of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the meaning and significance of human experience (ontological questions);</li> <li>the nature and meaning of knowledge (epistemological questions);</li> <li>moral and ethical values of contemporary significance (moral questions);</li> <li>the nature and meaning of concepts fundamental to a given subject matter (analytical questions)</li> </ol> </li> <li>include written and/or spoken exercises.</li> </ol>
<p><b>The Arts</b> Students will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of at least one principal form of artistic expression and the creative process inherent therein.</li> </ul>	<p><b>AC- AESTHETIC - CRITICAL AND DISCRIMINATIVE</b> Teaches a critical and discriminative approach to the arts. The course must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide a historical context for the art form being studied;</li> <li>include substantive and explicit connections with the contemporary</li> </ol>

	<p>world;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. treat the subject within the context of its culture and period;</li> <li>d. include a discussion of form and style;</li> <li>e. include significant participation as an audience for the visual, performing, and literary arts;</li> <li>f. include the writing of critical essays or reviews.</li> </ul> <p><b>AE - AESTHETIC - EXPERIENTIAL</b></p> <p>The primary basis of the course is the development of formal or creative skill in the fine, performing, and literary arts by directly engaging in the creative or performance activity.</p> <p>The course must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. include critical analysis of form and content;</li> <li>b. involve group and/or individual critical discussion and evaluation of student work;</li> <li>c. investigate conceptual approaches applicable to the medium;</li> <li>d. may include exposure to contemporary and historical examples of work in the relevant medium;</li> <li>e. include creative problem-solving in the medium;</li> <li>f. require student to attend as audience members at least one artistic event outside of class (e.g., concert, play, exhibit, reading) during the semester course is taught.</li> </ul> <p>*NB: F or the purposes of General Education, Dance and Drama are considered two different departments.</p>
<p><b>Foreign Language</b></p> <p>Students will demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic proficiency in the understanding and use of a foreign language; and</li> <li>• Knowledge of the distinctive features of culture(s) associated with the language they are studying.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ML – Modern Language</b></p> <p>Every student must demonstrate proficiency in at least one modern language other than English. This requirement may be met by successfully completing a course numbered "103" in a SUNY Potsdam language sequence or its equivalent or by successfully completing any single 200-level language course within the Department of Modern Languages.</p> <p>Students whose native language is not English, or who have successfully completed four years of high school study of the same language, or who have earned a score of three or higher on an advanced placement language examination have completed this requirement.</p> <p>Detailed information concerning requirements appears in this year's General Education Manual for Students.</p>

**Basic Communication**

Students will:

- **Produce coherent texts with common college-level written forms;**
- **Demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts;**
- Research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details;
- Develop proficiency in oral discourse; and
- Evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.

**WI, SI, FW, FS****WI - WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSE**

Each student must satisfactorily complete one course designated Writing-Intensive. This course may be a course in the major, a free elective, or a course offered in the Modes of Inquiry. To be designated Writing-Intensive, a course must require a minimum of 15 pages of out-of-class writing. At least 40% of each student's final grade in the course will be based on out-of-class writing. The focus of a WI course is on writing as an ongoing process of revision and not as a product. Therefore, the 15 pages will be submitted over the course of the semester and the instructor will give written comments (mandatory) and oral comments (recommended) on the drafts; a total of 15 pages must be revised and submitted in light of those comments. The 15 pages may be one paper or distributed over several different papers. There must be instruction in the nature of successful writing in the discipline. Prerequisite: Freshman Writing [FW] or equivalent.

**SI - SPEAKING-INTENSIVE COURSE**

Each student must satisfactorily complete one course designated Speaking-Intensive. This course may be a course in the major, a free elective, or a course offered in the Modes of Inquiry. To be designated Speaking-Intensive, a course must require students to participate in a semester-long series of structured oral communication assignments that will be critiqued by the instructor, and will constitute at least 40% of each student's final grade in the course. Assignments may take the form of group or panel discussions, debates, speeches, or other oral assignments appropriate to the course.

Students will be expected to understand principles of effective oral communication in the discipline, and to practice speaking in class regularly throughout the semester. Prerequisite: Freshman Speaking [FS] or equivalent.

**FW - FIRST-YEAR WRITING**

Preamble: The FW course teaches the composition of sound and effective written arguments suitable for academic contexts. The course should encourage student writers to think critically as they develop logical, complex arguments, and to develop a repertoire of skills in invention, drafting, revision, and editing.

Knowledge Areas: Develop the following understandings about writers and writing:

- a. Writers make diverse choices, depending on audience, occasion, and experience.
- b. Writers consider the ways that language permits communication, shapes thought and changes over time.
- c. Discussion, debate, research, and inquiry can be a source of growth and challenge for writers.
- d. Most significant issues are complex and often contain competing perspectives, which must be weighed and considered when constructing written arguments.

Skills addressed: Strengthen the following abilities:

- a. Read using analytical and evaluative skills necessary for effective development of written argument.
  - read and respond to a wide variety of written texts that demand close attention, accurately represent the ideas and information in those texts through paraphrase, summary, and synthesis;
  - raise questions, mark a text, take reading notes, and create outlines ;
  - analyze, at a level appropriate for first-year students, how published writers construct arguments;
- b. Use composing skills that support thoughtful planning, drafting, and revising.
  - apply a variety of invention techniques;
  - create multiple drafts in order to strengthen both argument and language;
  - revise for significance, focus, precision, conciseness, and liveliness
  - consider the responses of actual readers;
- c. Use writing to construct, and to present, strong arguments.
  - frame and analyze problems;
  - analyze and address the perspective of intended readers
  - develop and evaluate claims;
  - develop evidence to support claims and properly document that evidence when appropriate;
- d. Develop coherence in written texts.
  - establish a purpose for each written text that is clear and consistent throughout;
  - create sentences and paragraphs that grow and build on each other in a logical progression;
  - develop clear relationships among all points, striving for internal

consistency;

e. Develop information literacy skills

- use a general periodical database effectively;
- complete designated tutorials and quizzes on the College's online Information Literacy Course ;
- Practice using a Research Log;
- See [http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general\\_education/gef](http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/gef) for details

Assignments:

- Complete at least four papers (3-5 pages each) incorporating elements of the writing process, with commentary from the instructor both in the working draft stage and on the submitted final draft. Peer critique is encouraged, as are opportunities to practice library research and the integration and documentation of source material.
- Complete online Information Literacy tutorials and quizzes details at:  
[http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general\\_education/gef](http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/gef).

**FS - SPEAKING, REASONING AND RESEARCH**

Knowledge area: Discipline based knowledge.

Skills: Improve students' ability to:

- a. develop clear and focused thesis statements that are appropriate for the time allocated, the audience, and the occasion;
- b. outline a speech with a clear thesis statement, main points, and sub-points;
- c. identify demographic and situational factors that a speaker needs to know about an audience;
- d. understand the role of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, testimony) in developing a logical argument;
- e. understand the role of speaker credibility (ethos) and emotional/motivational appeals (pathos) in building support for a speaker's ideas;
- f. communicate in both verbal and nonverbal dimensions of delivery;
- g. recognize the similarities and differences between informative and persuasive speaking;
- h. recognize the similarities and differences between written and oral communication;
- i. recognize and practice ethical oral communication (emphasizing

	<p>intellectual integrity of ideas, their accurate presentation, and proper citation);</p> <p>j. use the library catalog;</p> <p>k. See <a href="http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/gef">http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/gef</a> or specific outcomes and specific online tutorials to be completed.</p> <p>Exercises:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Two five-minute speeches to the class (one informative, one persuasive). Each speech should be based on a formal, preparatory outline with bibliography, and delivered using brief speaker notes. At least one of the speeches should require students to cite outside sources in support of their ideas and/or arguments.</li> <li>2. Annotated bibliography of at least two catalog sources used in their speech (details at <a href="http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/gef">http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/gef</a>)</li> <li>3. Faculty are encouraged to require additional graded or ungraded speaking experiences; to require a critical essay to help students understand the differences between oral and written communication; and to require students to incorporate presentational aids in at least one of their speeches.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Critical Thinking</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or other's work; and</li> <li>• Develop well-reasoned arguments.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infused in General Education Areas</b></p> <p><b>[FC] CRITICAL THINKING (1 course, minimum of 3 credit hours)</b></p> <p>An FC course may combine with a maximum of one Mode of Inquiry course, but may not combine with another First-year Experience course (i.e., FW, FS, FM); and may not combine with a course designated PE, WI, or SI.</p> <p>Knowledge area: Discipline based</p> <p>Introduces the standards of good reasoning and strengthens basic reasoning skills. Major course objectives shall include oral and written practice to develop the following abilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) identify the main question, problem, or claim in discourse, and think through it in a critical, creative manner according to the standards of good reasoning, that is, the rules of argument; (2) model the critical thinking processes, or patterns, in the humanities, natural sciences, or social sciences; and (3) self-consciously apply the standards of critical thinking.</li> </ol>

	<p><b>Skills:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the issue or question. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand what considerations are relevant to the issue or question.</li> <li>• Know who bears the burden of proof.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Identify the logical structure of arguments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the conclusion.</li> <li>• Identify the explicit premises and the implicit premises or assumptions the argument requires for its conclusion to follow.</li> <li>• Identify the evidence offered to support the premises.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Evaluate arguments and counterarguments, competing hypotheses, or rival explanations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine whether the conclusion follows from the premises.</li> <li>• Consider whether all the premises are true, and relevant.</li> <li>• Evaluate the supporting evidence, data, models, concepts, experimental design, or the reliability of the source providing evidence.</li> <li>• Develop skill in formulating counter-examples, alternative explanations, or conceptual models that may account for the evidence, data, etc.</li> <li>• Recognize informal fallacies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Use the above standards to construct and evaluate one's own arguments.</li> </ol> <p><b>Exercises:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Classroom exercises with oral practice involving as many students as possible.</li> <li>2. Short written assignments, and</li> <li>3. An assignment designed to develop the ability to distinguish and evaluate sources, particularly web sources (see <a href="http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/gef">http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/general_education/gef</a> for details).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Information Management</b>  Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform the basic operations of personal computer use;</li> <li>• Understand and use basic research techniques; and</li> <li>• Locate, evaluate and synthesize information from a variety of sources.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infused in FW and FS</b></p>

## **Part One: SUNY Potsdam Triennial Update of General Education Assessment Plan**

- 1. The objectives for student learning in General Education relate directly to the student learning outcomes defined in the *Implementation Guidelines* of the Provost's Advisory Task Force on General Education.**

SUNY Potsdam uses the exact wording of the SUNY General Education learning objectives on each of its faculty reporting forms. Our own program has additional requirements (for example, additional requirements in the arts as we are a SUNY-designated Arts campus). Currently, our assessment evaluates only the SUNY learning outcomes. Each department and program, however, is currently establishing course outcomes, and then department outcomes.

- 2. Programmatic activities intended to accomplish the campus' objectives for student learning in General Education are described.**

All courses submitted for approval for General Education designators come before the General Education Committee, a committee that consists of both appointed and elected members of the faculty, plus two student representatives. The course proposal goes first to a subcommittee for the designator requested, then is brought forward to the whole committee for approval. If a course is not approved, the subcommittee chair works with the faculty member to improve the proposal.

- 3. The measures developed to assess student learning are designed to provide credible evidence of the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes or skills stated in the objectives.**

- **Will it directly measure student learning?** The data capturing instrument for measuring the achievement of student learning outcomes for General Education includes the following two questions related to the measurement of student learning:
  - Indicate the assessment tools used to assess the SUNY Learning Outcomes (a list of 11 common direct measure assessment tools and activities are listed and include such things as projects, standardized tests, quizzes, life performances, oral presentations, etc.)
  - What assignments and/or assessment activities did you feel were most effective in generating assessment data to measure the percentage of students who were exceeding, meeting, approaching or not meeting expected outcomes?
- **Will it measure the objective it is intended to measure (i.e. Will it have reasonable face validity)?** Information regarding the rigor applied to ensuring that face validity is considered when developing assessment instruments is not currently collected. Because Middle States will not accept GPAs as evidence of

achievement of student learning outcomes, SUNY Potsdam is currently working on developing ways to ensure that specific and appropriate assessment instruments are used to measure the achievement of learning outcomes for each course. Workshops have addressed this and every indication is that faculty are “making the shift” to align valid and reliable assessment tools and activities with expected learning outcomes. In addition, each department across the college is working on course outcomes and department outcomes.

- **Will the plan provide assurances that the measure is reliable, particularly with respect to the ability of two independent scorers to rate it similarly (inter-rater reliability)?** A number of assessment activities at SUNY Potsdam, including the assessment of First-year Writing and Writing Intensive outcomes, currently utilize methods that include both random sampling of writing portfolios and multiple scoring to establish inter-rater reliability. While these methods are not universal throughout General Education, faculty are aware of establishing fair scoring methods for learning outcomes that would be reliably scored by others with similar results.
- **Does the plan include externally referenced measures of the campus’s choice – either nationally or SUNY-normed – for the learning outcomes in Mathematics, Basic Communication (written), and Critical Thinking (Reasoning)?** Mathematics: SUNY Potsdam continues to anticipate the SUNY-normed Mathematics instrument; Basic Communication: Writing assessment measures are adapted from nationally recognized work by Krieger and Saint-Amand Rhetorical Guide as it appears in Instructor’s Manual for *Dialogue and Discovery: Writing and Reading Across Disciplines* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1996); SUNY Potsdam’s Philosophy department has conducted the *California Critical Thinking Skills Test* (CCTST) for two consecutive years and are in the process of using the results to improve the student learning outcomes and skills related to critical thinking.
- **Will the data that are reported be representative?** SUNY Potsdam’s 2008 assessment of General Education’s student learning outcomes had representative samples of between 27% and 67% of students enrolled in courses with Gen Ed outcome designators. While assessment data from the largest sample possible is always desired, the 20% of enrollment standard of Middle States Association of College and Schools is SUNY Potsdam’s minimal standard.

- **Does the plan include value-added measures including adequate description of when measures will be administered and how problems commonly related to pre-and post testing will be addressed?** Potsdam's library staff has been conducting a "value-added" assessment of Information Literacy (IM) by conducting pre- and post-tests of student information literacy at the beginning and at the end of courses in which IM is assessed. This grant-funded process has been conducted for several years. In addition, Potsdam's assessment of student writing similarly assesses selected student work from First-year Writing classes and compares them to the work of the same student after completion of the advanced writing class (Writing Intensive). In addition, some science departments have developed some "value-added" measures for assessing student progress.

**4. The plan proposes standards to which student performance relative to the learning outcomes in the objectives can be compared.**

The General Education Committee will be conducting workshops beginning next fall at which the standards for “exceeding,” “meeting,” etc. will be established for each designator. Currently, each faculty member makes that determination.

**5. The anticipated results of the assessment are able to affirm the degree to which the learning objectives have been achieved and thus make it possible to identify areas that need to be addressed in order to improve learning.**

Assessment results have been presented by the Director of Academic Assessment at various venues, including General Education Committee meetings. In some cases it is already clear from the data where improvements need to be made; these improvements will take place as a result of faculty working together in designator-based workshops to improve their results. This will be facilitated by the two new Closing the Loop questions that have now been added to every designator assessment form.

**6. Mechanisms for assessing the campus academic environment are described.**

SUNY Potsdam administers the NSSE every year on campus.

**7. The assessment plan has been reviewed and approved through the appropriate curriculum and faculty governance structures.**

The Director of General Education, as a member of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, presented the plan to the Faculty Senate this spring.

**8. The plan adheres to the timetable established by the GEAR Group and agreed to by the University Provost.**

SUNY Potsdam has established a three-year cycle of assessment as follows:

Year 1 ('08/'09)	AE/AC, FW/WI, PI, SA	[NSSE]
Year 2 ('09/'10)	FM, PE, SB/SP& LB, WC	[NSSE]
Year 3 ('10-'11)	AH, FC, FS/SI, ML, XC	[NSSE] [IM]*

\*Information Management is infused across the designators, and is evaluated by a multiple-designator group, under the auspices of the SUNY Potsdam library faculty.

**9. The assessment process includes provisions for evaluating the assessment process itself and disseminating assessment results to the appropriate campus community.**

The assessment process is conducted online, and each assessment document contains a link to the office of the Director of Academic Assessment so that faculty can ask questions or express concerns about the process. After the assessment is completed, each faculty member is contacted and given a link to the assessment results. Once the assessment of each designator is reported, results are presented on campus at various venues, including the General Education Committee. Many good suggestions have arisen from these presentations; they will be discussed and changes implemented through the General Education subcommittee for Assessment. All possible changes will be presented to the full committee for discussion and voting, if necessary. The final step will be implementation of improvements to the process.

## **Part II: SUNY Potsdam General Education Committee Triennial Update of General Education Assessment Plan**

### **Responses to ten Closing the Loop questions.**

#### **1. The campus disseminated assessment data to appropriate faculty/staff for review.**

We are in the process of disseminating the results of our most recent assessment (Year 3 of the cycle). Our Director of Academic Assessment has presented preliminary results to the General Education Committee. A link to the data collected has been sent to all faculty teaching courses with the listed designators; that link asks faculty to contact the Director of Academic Assessment with any suggestions for improvement to the process. In addition, the General Education Director presented an overview of the process the University Faculty Senate and the Council of Chairs.

#### **2. Appropriate faculty/staff members met to discuss assessment results in relation to intended learning outcomes and relative to *a priori* standards, and reached reasonable conclusions regarding programmatic strengths and weaknesses.**

Assessment has been discussed at several General Education committee meetings. As mentioned above, a subcommittee for assessment has been formed in order to improve assessment of our program. One item for the subcommittee is the development of *a priori* standards for the next round of assessment this spring. The committee will be working to establish percentages of students who met or exceed standards that faculty teaching each designator find acceptable. Each reporting form contains two "Closing the Loop" questions asking faculty to describe the assignments that best assessed their students' learning outcomes, and also to state what modifications they plan for the next time they teach the course in order to improve outcomes.

#### **3. Faculty/staff made recommendations for curricular/teaching changes based on documented assessment results.**

Individual faculty have made comments on how they intend to make changes and these will form part of the designator-based faculty development workshops to be held this spring and next fall in order to assist faculty in developing assessment strategies. We will also be looking at ways to strengthen communication across disciplines in order to better fulfill each mode requirement.

#### **4. Changes in curriculum and/or teaching were actually implemented as a result of faculty discussions and recommendations.**

In order to implement changes, the General Education committee planned a series of faculty development workshops for each designator assessed. These workshops will be one of the primary places where changes will be discussed. Coordinators for each of the First-Year foundation courses have been in place for some time; these coordinators have already conducted faculty workshops, set up websites, and made themselves available for one-on-one consultations with faculty interested in teaching these courses.

#### **5. Closing the loop process clearly and logically leads to the next assessment round.**

Our process, because of the questions and responses on the assessment forms themselves, leads directly to the next round of assessment. Furthermore, our designator-based workshops will keep the

process moving. As noted above, presentations on the process have been made to the Faculty Senate and the Council of Chairs.

**6. Department/program had mechanisms in place for documenting assessment results, closing the loop process, and intended changes resulting from the assessment results.**

General Education's online assessment program has resulted in documentation and dissemination of results, as described above. Further work, based primarily in our faculty development workshops, will result in changes to be implemented in the future. Again, it is important to note that these workshops will be interdisciplinary, as reflects the nature of our General Education Program.

**7. Closing the loop process includes planning as appropriate for ongoing professional development activities for faculty and staff.**

Professional development activities have been outlined above. We have already held a campus assessment workshop, supported by funding from the Provost's Office, with Linda Suskie facilitating. We are planning another campus-wide program soon. Workshops planned for fall and spring will be assisting faculty to build outcomes into syllabi, in order to make assessment easier and more effective.

**8. There is clear institutional support (e.g., financial support) for departments/programs that wish to make improvements based on assessment results.**

While institutional support will necessarily be limited because of declining budgets, SUNY Potsdam recently received a major Title III grant for undergraduate research that includes funding for faculty development. In addition, the Provost's Office has indicated that support for assessment programs will continue. As mentioned above, we have already held a campus-wide assessment program facilitated by Dr. Linda Suskie. In the future, we intend to make use of presenters from our own faculty. We have been in contact with Nancy Willie-Schiff about an assessment presentation on campus that would be open to other SUNY schools as well. Further institutional support for General Education assessment from the administration comes in the form of a modest stipend for each of the coordinators for the First-year foundations courses provided by the Provost's Office. It should be noted, too, that general institutional support for assessment is shown by the appointment of a Director of Academic Assessment on July 1, 2008.

**9. The assessment process itself is evaluated and revised based on the previous assessment round (and approved, as appropriate, by campus governance).**

The assessment process itself is undergoing continuous evaluation by the General Education committee and by the formation of a General Education subcommittee on assessment. It should be noted that the college did fill the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, which deals in large part with assessment. The Director of General Education is an *ex officio* member of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, and has just given a report on assessment to the Faculty Senate and the Council of Chairs.

**10. Assessment results are disseminated to the larger campus community.**

Assessment results are in the process of being disseminated to the campus community as a whole. The Director of Institutional Effectiveness has presented assessment data to many campus groups, with more to come. As noted above, General Education has several paid coordinators for First-Year programs (e.g. for writing, for critical thinking, and for public speaking) who have conducted

workshops, set up websites using Blackboard, and met one-on-one with faculty interested in incorporating designators into their classes.



**General Education Plan Review – Triennial Plan Updates  
SUNY General Education Assessment Review Group (GEAR)**

**Campus:** SUNY Potsdam  
**Date of Review:** November 13, 2009

**GEAR Review Recommendation: Approve as Submitted**

Criteria:

1. The objectives for student learning in General Education relate directly to the student learning outcomes defined in the *Implementation Guidelines* of the Provost's Advisory Task Force on General Education.

*The plan meets this criterion.*

2. Programmatic activities intended to accomplish the campus' objectives for student learning in General Education are described.

*The plan meets this criterion, with no apparent changes since Potsdam's original plan was approved.*

3. The measures developed to assess student learning are designed to provide credible evidence of the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes or skills stated in the objectives.

- The measures directly measure student learning.

*The plan meets this criterion.*

- The measures have reasonable face validity.

*The plan meets this criterion.*

- The measures are reliable, particularly with respect to inter-observer reliability.

*The plan meets this criterion.*

- The plan includes appropriate external referenced measures for the learning outcomes in Mathematics, Basic Communication (Written), and Critical Thinking (Reasoning).

*The review group was confused about this issue, since Potsdam's report indicates the campus is using the CCTST to assess critical thinking (not an approved SCBA measure), is assessing writing using Krieger and Saint-Amand's Rhetorical Guide (not an approved SCBA measure), and intends to use the SUNY-normed Mathematics instrument (which was never developed). An examination of Potsdam's GE schedule as submitted to System Administration, however, shows the campus will use the ACT CAAP for Critical Thinking, a GEAR-approved local rubric for Writing, and a local rubric (to be developed) for Mathematics. GEAR reminds Potsdam that the local rubric for Mathematics requires approval by GEAR prior to administration.*

- The data to be collected will be representative.

*The plan meets this criterion.*

- The plan includes, if the campus opts to use a value-added approach, an adequate description of when measures will be administered and how problems common to pre- and post-testing will be addressed.

*Not applicable, since none of the campus' SCBA assessment is being done in value-added fashion.*

4. The plan proposes standards to which student performance relative to the learning outcomes in the objectives can be compared.

*The plan meets this criterion. GEAR does feel that Potsdam's present approach, which allows individual faculty members to make these determinations, is problematic, and commends the campus for establishing more common standards.*

5. The anticipated results of the assessment affirm the degree to which the learning objectives have been achieved and make it possible to identify areas that need to be addressed in order to improve learning.

*The plan meets this criterion.*

6. The plan describes mechanisms for assessing the campus academic environment and considering possible relationships between academic assessment results and the campus academic environment.

*Not applicable to this plan, although Potsdam does administer the NSSE every year.*

7. The assessment plan has been reviewed and approved through the appropriate curriculum and faculty governance structures.

*Although it is not stated explicitly, GEAR assumes that the Faculty Senate approved the campus' GE assessment plan when it was presented in the spring. On the other hand, significant changes don't appear to have been made. GEAR reminds Potsdam that all substantive changes to its GE assessment plan do require governance approval.*

8. The plan includes a timetable making it clear that all General Education learning objectives will be completed within a three-year cycle.

*The plan meets this criterion.*

9. The assessment process includes provisions for evaluating the assessment process itself and disseminating assessment results to the appropriate campus community.

*The plan meets this criterion.*