General Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo)

Handbook for Assessment

Ramapo College of New Jersey
Last updated December 2014
Originally prepared by Nicholas Salter, PhD
What is Assessment?

According to the *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, published by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, assessment of student learning seeks to answer one central question: “Are our students learning what we want them to learn?” (63). To answer this question, an academic program responds to three interrelated questions:

1. What should our students know or be able to do? To answer this question, a program lists its student learning outcomes.
2. Where do students learn what we hope they will know or be able to do? To answer this question, a program maps its outcomes to its curriculum.
3. How do we know that they have learned what we hope they will know or be able to do? To answer this question, a program implements assessments.

When designing an assessment, best practices suggest that the assessment should include, whenever possible, as many as four characteristics:

1. *Authentic* – the assessment should be an authentic task; in other words, it should be something the students would (or could) do in real life.
2. *Embedded* – the assessment should be embedded into the pre-existing class structure and/or into a specific assignment; it should not be perceived as something separate from class.
3. *Direct* – the assessment should directly measure the student’s learning of the stated outcome (more on direct vs. indirect assessment below).
4. *Multiple measures* – the assessment should include at least two measures to achieve triangulation (multiple answers to the same question, etc., etc., etc.).

Programs may not always be able to administer an authentic or an embedded assessment. A standardized instrument, for example, may be more appropriate. However, as a general rule of thumb at Ramapo College, programs use at least two measures, at least one of which is direct, to assess each outcome.

Assessment is conducted in the context of a *particular course*, within a *convening group/academic program*, or on an *institutional level*. For the purposes of GECCo, we conduct assessment at the programmatic level (i.e., *general education* level).
For More Information . . .

For more information on assessment, please visit the Middle States webpage. This page contains copious guidelines and tools for assessment, including information on Middle States’ expectations:

http://www.msche.org/publications.asp
(Click on “Guidelines for Institutional Improvement” for assessment-related documentation).

In particular, the following publication may prove useful:


Also, visit the Ramapo College assessment webpage. This site has many helpful Ramapo-specific resources, including more tools and information on assessment best practices:

http://www.ramapo.edu/assessment/

Finally, please be sure to visit the GECCo website. This site houses all of the committee’s previous assessment reports, a curriculum map, and the general-education goals and outcomes:

http://www.ramapo.edu/fa/gecco/
Direct vs. Indirect Assessment

An important distinction in assessment is the difference between a direct and an indirect assessment. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2007) provides the following suggestion on this:

Direct and indirect methods of evaluating learning relate to whether or not the method provides evidence in the form of student products or performances. Such evidence demonstrates that actual learning has occurred relating to a specific content or skill. Indirect methods reveal characteristics associated with learning, but they only imply that learning has occurred. These characteristics may relate to the student, such as perceptions of student learning, or they may relate to the institution, such as graduation rates.

When a student completes a calculus problem correctly and shows her work, learning is demonstrated directly. When the same student describes her own calculus abilities as excellent, she is demonstrating indirectly that she has learned calculus. Both of these pieces of information about the student’s performance are important. For example, a student’s perception that she is doing poorly in calculus when she is actually doing well would provide important information to both the student and the professor. However, indirect evidence—in this case, a perception—is less meaningful without the associated direct and tangible evidence of learning.

Direct assessment: a direct assessment will directly measure student's learning. This type of assessment allows students to demonstrate their knowledge. Directly assessing students is not necessarily enough for a direct assessment – the measure must actually assess whether or not the student learned something or not. Therefore, student opinions/beliefs about their own learning would not qualify as a direct assessment.

In the past, GECCo has conducted direct assessments. Examples include:

- **Collecting student papers**: collect a sample of student papers that are relevant to the learning outcome; outside assessors rate the paper on the outcome according to a predetermined rubric. This is a direct assessment because it allows students to demonstrate their knowledge of the outcome.
- **Embedded question**: embed a question that allows students to demonstrate their knowledge or skills (not a question asking their opinion about their learning) into an assignment; outside assessors rate the paper on the outcome according to a predetermined rubric. This is a direct assessment because it allows students to demonstrate their knowledge of the outcome. NOTE: embedded questions need not necessarily be factual; they may be anything that allows students to demonstrate their knowledge or skills.

Indirect assessment: an indirect assessment does not actually measure if the student has achieved the learning outcome. Instead, in the words of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, "[I]ndirect methods reveal characteristics associated with learning, but they only imply that learning has occurred" (Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources 28). For example, student opinions/beliefs about learning would qualify as an indirect assessment because they give information suggesting whether or not
the students believe that they have achieved the outcome (which is still valuable and informative), but do not provide direct evidence.

In the past, GECCo has conducted indirect assessments. Examples of possible indirect assessments include:

- **Instructor opinion survey**: conduct a survey (either paper-and-pencil or online) asking instructors questions about their class and assignments relevant to the outcome. This is an indirect assessment because it indirectly measures if the learning outcome is achieved in the class (i.e., it measures if the students believe they learned the outcome).
- **Syllabus audit**: collect syllabi of classes relevant to the outcome and examine if information (such as if the outcome is included in the course goals or if there are related assignments) is included. This is an indirect assessment because it indirectly measures if the learning outcome is achieved in the class (i.e., it measures if the students were provided with opportunities such as assignments or readings to reach the outcome).
- **Focus group**: bring together a small group of faculty or students around a short set of questions aimed at determining the degree to which faculty have provided learning opportunities or the degree to which students feel they have learned a particular skill. Guided by a leader and recorded by a note-taker, a focus group can provide rich data, but it is labor-intensive in organization and analysis.

**NOTE**: detailed examples and more in-depth information about each of these assessments will be provided later in this document.

**Question: is a survey a direct or indirect measure?**

A survey can be a direct or an indirect measure, depending on how it is designed. If the survey is sent to students and it directly measures whether or not they have achieved the learning outcome, then it is a direct measure. For instance (in the context of the outcome “International Perspective”), sending a survey to students asking “what is the effect of globalization on economic disparities between first and third world countries?” would be a direct measure because the answer to this question would indicate whether or not the student has an understanding of a particular international issue.

On the other hand, a survey can be an indirect measure. If the survey is sent to students and asks if they have learned something, if something was included in their class, or how well they understand a particular topic, this would be an indirect measure. For instance (in the context of the outcome “International Perspective”), sending a survey to students asking “did you learn about the effect of globalization on economic disparities in this class?” or “how well do you understand the effect of globalization on economic disparities?” would be an indirect measure because the answer to this question indicates whether they were given opportunities to learn a skill or suggests whether they feel that they learned the skill, but the answer does not demonstrate whether they have actually learned the skill. This is insightful information about the student learning experience, but it is not direct.
The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2nd Edition, 2007) also provides the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Direct Measures</strong></th>
<th><strong>Indirect Measures</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Course and homework assignments</td>
<td>* Course evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Examinations and quizzes</td>
<td>* Test blueprints (outlines of the concepts and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Standardized tests</td>
<td>skills covered on tests)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Term papers and reports</td>
<td>* Percent of class time spent in active learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Observations of field work, internship performance,</td>
<td>* Number of student hours spent on service learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service learning, or clinical experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Research projects</td>
<td>* Number of student hours spent on homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Class discussion participation</td>
<td>* Number of student hours spent at intellectual or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Case study analysis</td>
<td>cultural activities related to the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Rubric (a criterion-based rating scale) scores for</td>
<td>* Grades that are not based on explicit criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing, oral presentations, and performances</td>
<td>related to clear learning goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Artistic performances and products</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Grades that are based on explicit criteria related to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear learning goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Best Practices for GECCo Assessments: General Process

In order to best conduct an assessment for GECCo, a number of steps should be taken. Ideally, the process should take approximately three semesters in order to ensure the process is as thorough as possible. Designing and implementing an effective assessment will lead to helpful and insightful findings that can be used to improve general education.

Semester 1: Designing the Assessment

1. The subcommittee should first come to consensus regarding the meaning of the outcome. GECCo currently has brief definitions and explanations of all the learning outcomes. For some outcomes (such as Communication and Quantitative Reasoning), what they mean is somewhat straightforward. However, other outcomes (such as Understanding the Way the World Works and Awareness) are more ambiguous; it would benefit the subcommittee to explicitly discuss the outcome and come to a shared understanding of what it means. Understanding what it means will lead to understanding how to best assess it.

2. Determine what the two assessments will be for the outcome. As stated, one must be direct and the other may be direct or indirect. Depending on what assessment is chosen, planning a general sampling, data collection, and coding strategy may be appropriate. More information is provided in the following section on the different types of assessment as well as how to conduct them.

3. Create a rubric if appropriate (see the next section in this document for more information on this).

4. Set an achievement target appropriate for the level of desired learning. For example, X% of students will meet or exceed expectations.

5. At this point, it would be beneficial to present the plan for assessment to the larger GECCo committee. They can give feedback on the appropriateness of the assessments and rubric.

6. All GECCo outcomes are linked to specific general education categories (see the GECCo website or later in this document for more information on this). The subcommittee should contact the “head” of each category (if he or she exists). For some categories (such as History or Readings in the Humanities), there is someone to contact. Other “heads” may be coordinators, directors, conveners, or deans. For other outcomes, a clear “head” may not exist. When (and if) these people are contacted, they should be told that the assessment is going to occur and what that means for their groups. A copy of the rubric should also be given.

7. Not every class in the category will be targeted to collect assessment data. Instead, the subcommittee should look at the schedule for the following semester and determine how many classes will be offered in the category that could be included in the assessment. Next, the subcommittee should determine which of those classes will actually be asked to participate in the assessment. The number of students in each section, if all of them will not be included in the sample, should be determined. Ideally, the total sample size should be 30-60 student products.
(e.g., papers). Next, the instructors teaching these classes should be contacted; an explanation of the assessment as well as how they will be involved should be explained. Also, a copy of the rubric should be given; the instructors should be encouraged to include it in the class in the next semester if applicable. If an embedded question will be used as an assessment, this should be given to the instructors now so that they can incorporate it into their classes. In addition to the instructors whose classes have been selected for assessment, all instructors teaching courses in the category under assessment should be informed of the assessment, reminded of the outcomes, and provided with the rubric (as appropriate).

Semester 2: Implementing the Assessment

(See the following section of this document for information on Semester 2).

Semester 3: Closing the Loop

1. Write a report detailing the assessment process and results. (See the GECCo website for examples.)

2. Share the results with the larger GECCo group. Incorporate any suggestions they have into the report.

3. Conduct a “Closing the Loop” session with instructors who teach in the general education categories targeted by the assessment. This should include a brief presentation on the assessment process and outcome. Ample time should be dedicated to discussion among the instructors regarding the meaning of the results. Suggestions for implications should also be discussed; the instructors will likely have ideas as to how to better teach the outcomes based on the results. Ideas from this session should be included into the report.

4. Report to Faculty Assembly. This may be done in conjunction with other assessments. Any feedback the group may have should be included into the report.

5. Once the report is finalized, it should be posted to the GECCo website.

6. NOTE: all “closing the loop” procedures should be done as soon after the assessment is done as possible so that the process is still fresh in everyone’s minds.
Communication Plan

In conjunction with the assessment process outlined above, the communication plan should be implemented every semester:

1. One month prior to the first day of the fall semester each year, the chair of GECCo will send to all faculty the following e-mail:

   The General-Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo) reminds the faculty to include the relevant general-education outcomes on course syllabi as applicable. The general-education outcomes as well as the curriculum map (which indicates which general-education categories have been mapped to those outcomes) can be found on the GECCo website at this link: http://www.ramapo.edu/fa/gecco/ The ARC Manual, which provides suggestions on how to include general-education outcomes on course syllabi, can be found at this link: http://www.ramapo.edu/fa/files/2013/04/ARC-Manual-2014-2015.pdf

2. One month prior to the first day of the fall and spring semesters each year, the chair of the relevant sub-committee for each planned Assessment will send to all faculty teaching courses in the particular categories being assessed the upcoming semester the following message, copied to the appropriate convener, director, or coordinator:

   Dear Instructor:

   As the representative of category X on the General-Education Curriculum Committee (GECCo), I have noticed that you are scheduled to teach a course in that category next semester. Since this category will be assessed in the upcoming semester, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the student learning outcomes (SLOs) for this category:

   [X, Y, Z]

   In an effort to communicate to students more clearly the outcomes for this category, I ask that you place the outcomes on your syllabus in accordance with the ARC syllabus template, which includes a section on general education. To review the syllabus template, please see the ARC Manual at this link: http://www.ramapo.edu/fa/files/2013/08/ARC-Manual-2013-2014.pdf

   Please let me know if you have any questions.

   Best wishes for the upcoming semester.
Best Practices for GECCo Assessments: Specific Assessment Techniques

In this section, detailed explanations of different types of assessments (as well as procedures for conducting them and a list of advantages and disadvantages) are provided.

Direct Assessments

1. Essay or Paper Scored on a Rubric

   For this assessment, papers, essays, or other assignments that are already part of the class are collected. This is an embedded assessment because it is something the students were already completing for class; it is not created specifically for the purposes of assessment. Once the papers are collected, assessors rate the papers on a pre-determined rubric to examine if the students demonstrate skill or knowledge on the outcome.

   **Advantages:** allows students to demonstrate skill/knowledge  
   **Disadvantages:** labor-intensive to collect and score

   **Procedure**

   a. Determine what type of paper or essay would be most appropriate for the outcome you are assessing. For instance, when assessing Written Communication, decide if only papers longer than a certain length will be used, or if only papers with (or without) research will be included. Note that depending on the outcome, determining an appropriate assignment may require input from the faculty teaching the class. For instance, when assessing Awareness, the previous GECCo subcommittee surveyed the faculty asking them if they required an assignment that was related to the outcome. Once the assignment is decided upon, a formal set of guidelines/requirements should be written up to ensure consistency once the paper collection process begins.

   b. Create a rubric which includes a set of criteria that defines or details the outcomes being assessed as well as proficiency levels (e.g., meets expectations, exceeds expectations, etc.) on the given criteria. The rubric should stem from the definition of the outcome the subcommittee previously determined. Rubrics have been created for many of the current GECCo outcomes (see the GECCo website for reports on the previous assessments); however, many rubrics that were used need modifications. The subcommittee should be thoughtful in ensuring the rubric best fits the outcome. Examples of rubrics (that can be used or modified) are often available from the AAC&U website (even if the exact outcome is not listed, a similar one that can be modified is often available).


   c. As discussed in the previous section, contact the targeted faculty whose classes will be included in the assessment. Explain to them what will be asked of them and provide them with the rubric. They should be encouraged to incorporate the rubric into their class.
d. The papers should be collected in such a way as to minimize the effort on the part of the instructors. For instance, they should be given the option of either providing GECCo with paper or electronic copies (depending on which is easier for them). Eventually, all papers will need to be anonymous (i.e., nothing that indicates the student or the class or faculty member). However, instructors can provide the papers “scrubbed” of all identifying information, or GECCo can do this for them (whichever is easier for them).

e. In addition to collecting the student papers, the assignment sheet should be collected. Once these are collected, identifying information (showing which class they came from) should be removed. However, a code should be used to indicate which student paper is part of which assignment sheet (or which assignment the student paper is responding to).

f. Select scorers to read and assess the papers. Typically it is helpful if instructors who teach in the targeted general education category are asked to be scorers because they have a vested interest in the course and are more likely to have meaningful discussions before, during, and/or after scoring that can feed back into the course.

g. If scorers will be included who provided papers for the assessment, ensure that they do not score papers from their own class.

h. Conduct a “calibration session” to explain the outcome and the scoring process to the scorers. During this session and extensive discussion of the definition of the outcome and the rubric should be held to ensure all scorers have a consistent understanding of the process. Examples of “low” and “high” proficiency should be offered. Two to three sample papers should be scored during the session to make sure scorers are consistently scoring the papers. Once the scorers understand the outcome and process, all materials (the rubric, papers, and assignment sheets) must then be distributed to the scorers. Scorers should be split up into pairs; each pair should read the same papers (therefore, each paper in the sample will be read by two people). Determine deadlines for when they should return their ratings by.

i. Individually, the scorers should read their papers and rate them on the rubric. Next, the pair of scorers should come together to go over their ratings. If the scores differ, the pair should discuss their rationale and determine a final rating. Both the individual original ratings and the final consensus rating should be marked.

j. After they have scored the materials, inter-rater reliability must be calculated. Specifically, the percentage of time the pair agreed on their first-round ratings (i.e., before they discussed their ratings) should be calculated.

k. Finally, the data can be analyzed and written up.

For further information: See the Written Communication assessment (Fall 2010) or the Awareness assessment (Spring 2013) on the GECCo website.
2. **Embedded Question or Assignment**

For this assessment, GECCo members and the instructors in the targeted classes create a question or assignment to be included in the class. For instance, an essay question could be added to an exam or a short paper could be given uniformly to all classes targeted. This is similar to the previously discussed assessment in that it allows students to demonstrate their skill or knowledge, and it may more directly assess the outcome (if it is created appropriately). However, it may be difficult to create something that everyone can agree on.

*Advantages*: fairly easy to collect and score; embedded

*Disadvantages*: requires faculty consensus on the question and may be difficult to create

**Procedure**

a. Create a question or assignment whose answer will allow students to directly demonstrate their knowledge or skill. For instance, asking the students to explain or discuss a concept could assess the outcome, but asking if they learned about the concept would not. The instructors teaching the class (who will embed this into their class) should be involved in this process. Once the question or assignment is decided upon, a formal set of guidelines/requirements should be written up to ensure consistency once the process begins.

b. Create a rubric for scoring the question or assignment. This rubric need not be as involved as a rubric for collecting papers or essays from class; for instance, a simple checklist may suffice.

c. The rest of the procedure is similar to that of the previously discussed assessment (i.e., scoring a paper or essay on a rubric).
3. **External Assignment or Quiz**

For this assessment, a quiz with factually correct or incorrect answers should be given. A math test or an information literacy quiz with right and wrong answers would be examples of this. This assessment is administered separate from class (either via an email survey or during class time and is not part of the student’s class grade. This is easy to score but is not possible for every type of assessment. For instance, there is no external assignment or quiz that measures Experiential Learning directly.

*Advantages: easy to score*

*Disadvantages: not authentic or embedded; may not be appropriate for all outcomes*

**Procedure**

a. First, create the quiz. This may be something premade (such as the CLA for Critical Inquiry) or developed for purposes of the assessment.

b. Determine if the quiz will be administered online or as a paper-and-pencil test. Students may not complete an online quiz as readily, but it may be easier to administer and does require class time as a paper-and-pencil test does.

c. If administering the quiz online:
   - Put the quiz onto a survey platform, such as Qualtrics.
   - Obtain a list of all students currently enrolled in the categories targeted by the outcome. These email addresses can be obtained from the Provost’s office.
   - Obtain a list of all instructors currently teaching in these categories (as well as any conveners or directors involved in these classes). These email addresses can also be obtained from the Provost’s office or from the online class schedule.
   - Email a link to all instructors to let them know you will be assessing their students.
   - Email a link to all students asking them to complete the quiz. Send a reminder two weeks later to encourage more participation.

d. If administering a paper-and-pencil version of the quiz:
   - Obtain a list of all instructors currently teaching in these categories (as well as any conveners or directors involved in these classes). These email addresses can also be obtained from the Provost’s office or from the online class schedule.
   - Determine a subsample of which classes will be assessed.
   - Contact the instructors of these classes to see if they are willing to allow class time for the quiz.
   - Go into classes and administer the quiz.

e. Finally, the data can be analyzed and written up.

*For further information:* See the Quantitative Reasoning assessment (Spring 2011) or the Information Literacy assessment (Fall 2012) on the GECCo website.
**Indirect Assessments**

1. **Syllabus Audit**

   For this assessment, syllabi from classes in the targeted categories are collecting and analyzed. Information regarding the learning goals, outcomes, and assignments are noted to determine if they include the outcome targeted by the assessment. It should be noted that often times the instructor may not put this level of detail on their syllabus. This would therefore indicate that the outcome is not being taught in the class – which may not be true. Therefore, caution should be used when interpreting syllabi audits. They should be designed in such a way as to ensure they will yield useful data.

   **Advantages:** easy to conduct  
   **Disadvantages:** depending on use, may not reveal significant data

**Procedure**

- a. Obtain a list of all instructors currently teaching in these categories (as well as any conveners or directors involved in these classes). These email addresses can also be obtained from the Provost's office or from the online class schedule.

- b. Contact these instructors and request a copy of their current syllabus.

- c. Develop a "checklist" for things to look for on the syllabi. This can include looking for a outcome related to what is being assessed, or an assignment related to the targeted outcome.

- d. Check the syllabi to see if they meet the criteria on the checklist. Marking that something is "present" or "not present" is sufficient (rather than listing levels of depth in which the outcome is included in the class).

- e. Finally, the data can be analyzed and written up.

- f. Note: this assessment may be done before or after the direct assessment. It may not matter, or conducting this indirect assessment first may help develop what types of assignments should be used for the direct assessment.

**For further information:** See the Interdisciplinary Analysis assessment (Fall 2012) or the The Way the World Works assessment (Spring 2013) on the GECCo website.
2. **Faculty Opinion Survey**

This assessment seeks to measure what the instructor intends to include in the class (similar to a syllabus audit). However, as compared to a syllabus audit, this directly asks the instructor (rather than relying on the syllabus, which may omit information). This assessment can also add specific questions such as “what types of assignments do you include for this outcome” or “do you explicitly or implicitly include this outcome in your class” which cannot be as easily assessed with a syllabus audit.

*Advantages:* provides rich data about perceptions of learning  
*Disadvantages:* paper-and-pencil version can be time consuming to analyze

**Procedure**

a. Obtain a list of all instructors currently teaching in these categories (as well as any conveners or directors involved in these classes). These email addresses can also be obtained from the Provost’s office or from the online class schedule.

b. Create a survey including questions around the outcome. Keep in mind length – instructors may be less likely to complete a long survey. It is recommended to create the survey on an online platform such as Qualtrics. Because the group of instructors targeted is large, if only a percentage of them complete the survey you will still obtain a useful sample size. Creating an online survey will also result in not having to enter data and will later speed up analyses.

c. Send an email to all faculty teaching in the categories asking them to complete the survey. Send a reminder email two weeks later.

d. Finally, the data can be analyzed and written up. Note: it is recommended to use data analysis software (such as Excel or SPSS) which can analyze the data quickly (i.e., 1 hour).

e. Note: this assessment may be done before or after the direct assessment. It may not matter, or conducting this indirect assessment first may help develop what types of assignments should be used for the direct assessment.

*For further information:* See the Information Literacy assessment (Fall 2012) or the Awareness assessment (Spring 2013) on the GECCo website.
3. **Student Opinion Survey**

This assessment is similar to the Faculty Opinion Survey in that it asks about perceptions of learning. The questions can be more detailed to gain richer understanding of what the students believe they have learned. Many of the advantages, disadvantages, and procedure of this assessment are similar to the previous assessment.

*Advantages:* provides rich data about perceptions of learning  
*Disadvantages:* paper-and-pencil version can be time consuming to analyze and administer

**Procedure**

a. Obtain a list of all students currently enrolled in the categories targeted by the outcome. These email addresses can be obtained from the Provost’s office.

b. Obtain a list of all instructors currently teaching in these categories (as well as any conveners or directors involved in these classes). These email addresses can also be obtained from the Provost’s office or from the online class schedule.

c. Create a survey including questions around the outcome. Keep in mind length – students may be less likely to complete a long survey. It is recommended to create the survey on an online platform such as Qualtrics. Because the group of students targeted is large, if only a percentage of them complete the survey you will still obtain a useful sample size. Creating an online survey will also result in not having to enter data and will later speed up analyses.

d. Well in advance of administering the survey, send an email to all faculty teaching in the categories (as well as any conveners or Directors, as appropriate) letting them know you will be assessing their students.

e. Email a link to all students asking them to complete the quiz. Send a reminder two weeks later to encourage more participation. If a paper survey is chosen, a GECCo member should distribute the survey.

f. Finally, the data can be analyzed and written up. Note: it is recommended to use data analysis software (such as Excel or SPSS) which can analyze the data quickly (i.e., 1 hour).

g. Note: this assessment may be done before or after the direct assessment. It may not matter, or conducting this indirect assessment first may help develop what types of assignments should be used for the direct assessment.

*For further information:* See the Intercultural North America assessment (Spring 2012) or the International Education assessment (Spring 2013) on the GECCo website.
Planning the Overall Assessment Cycle

The following points are “big picture” and other miscellaneous points that should be considered when planning GECCo assessment:

- Assessment should be a multi-year cycle. Historically, GECCo has adopted a 3-year cycle; this is long enough to comfortably conduct assessments of all the outcomes, but not so long that the results become less useful.
- To best accommodate a 3-year cycle (and to lessen fatigue), two outcomes should be assessed each semester. As discussed, each outcome entails two assessments (typically direct and indirect), which results in two direct and two indirect assessments per semester.
- Ideally, the schedule of what outcomes should be assessed during what semester would be pre-planned at the beginning of the cycle. However, whether this is or is not done, the actual plan for how each outcome will be assessed should be pre-planned in the previous semester.
- Assessments that require First Year Seminar should occur in the fall because typically only one or two sections of this class are offered in the spring. This is important to note because many GECCo outcomes include this category so will not be able to be properly assessed in the spring.
- As discussed, direct assessment is primarily conducted using embedded questions and by collecting essays/papers (though some outcomes may be assessed using external quizzes). GECCo should try to only conduct one of each kind (i.e. one embedded question and one paper collection) every semester in order to reduce the overall workload of the committee.
- Whenever raters need to score papers using a rubric or a checklist, they should meet in person to discuss their ratings and address any discrepancies. Some have tried to do this over email in the past but found that it was too difficult to discuss the matter – resulting in poor (and therefore not useful) assessment.
- Achievement targets must be set for each assessment (i.e., 70% of all student papers will score an “acceptable” on the rubric, or 80% of all faculty will report including an assignment about this outcome in their class). The actual target set for any assessment would vary, depending on the case.
- GECCo should not distribute findings their assessments except at the aggregate level (i.e., all the data) – and therefore GECCo cannot give an individual instructor the results from his or her class. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has given all assessment committees, including GECCo, approval to assess student learning as long as the committees use anonymous archival data (e.g., student papers), examine both students and faculty in the aggregate, and report results anonymously in the aggregate. In addition, the College-Wide Assessment Committee (CWAC) encourages assessment committees to report results anonymously and in the aggregate. IRB has indicated that any departure from this protocol will require securing consents from participating students and faculty.
- The GECCo chair has the password for all password-protected documents on the GECCo website.
Ramapo General Education Student Learning Outcomes

Outcome: Interdisciplinary Analysis Students will be able to:
  • Evaluate, integrate and apply disparate sorts of knowledge.
  • Create and employ innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to identify, comprehend, and address contemporary problems.

Outcome: Experiential Learning Students will be able to:
  • Construct and enhance practical skill sets by applying theoretical knowledge and conceptual understanding in authentic environments.
  • Identify how prior knowledge, skills, and conceptual understanding have been applied to their experiences and how their experiences will enhance future academic study and personal, professional, and civic development.
  • Reflect on their experiences individually and collectively by contextualizing assumptions and hypotheses about their knowledge, outcomes of their decisions, and actions they have taken, and by sharing their insights.
  • Understand and articulate the structure, relationships between, and impacts of the multiple communities and organizations with which they interact.

Outcome: International Perspective Students will able to:
  • Demonstrate adequate understanding of the complex and dynamic relationships between local, regional and global forces that shape globalization processes in the contemporary world, as they pertain to history, values, art, politics, literature, communication styles, economy, or development, and the beliefs and practices that shape these processes.

Outcome: Intercultural Perspective Students will able to:
  • Demonstrate adequate understanding of the interactions and dynamics of intercultural relationships in the context of history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices within the North American context.

Outcome: Critical Inquiry Students will be able to:
  • Clearly state and comprehensively describe issues or problems presented to them, providing all the relevant information necessary for their full understanding.
  • Identify their own and others' assumptions in presenting several relevant contexts when presenting a position.
  • Take a specific position on an issue (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) that take into account the complexities of the issue.
  • Acknowledge others' points of view within a position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).

Outcome: Quantitative Reasoning Students will be able to:
  • Use arithmetical, algebraic, geometric and statistical methods to solve problems.
  • Interpret mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables, and schematics, and draw inferences.
  • Represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically, and verbally.
  • Recognize and describe the limits of mathematical and statistical methods.
Outcome: Communication  Students will be able to:
- Formulate a theme or thesis, as appropriate for the oral or written communication task being undertaken.
- Develop and present coherent arguments in ways that are effective for the intended audience.

Outcome: Information Literacy  Students will be able to:
- Determine information needed and use information technology to find/access it.
- Evaluate found information/sources and use them effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
- Access information ethically and legally and understand the economic, legal, and social implications.

Outcome: Understanding the Way the World Works  Students will be able to:
- Understand the basic fundamentals of the scientific method used to comprehend and explain natural phenomena and understand the place of scientific knowledge in contemporary societies.
- Analyze social phenomena using perspectives drawn from the fields of history, economics, sociology, ecology, sustainability or other disciplines in the social sciences.
- Analyze significant examples of human cultural production and human thought through the study of works of literature, history, art, or philosophy, to understand the place of humanistic expression and creation.

Outcome: Awareness  Students will be able to:
- Articulate their individual values and ideals.
- Describe and reflect on the moral and civic dimension of issues, problems, and matters of individual and public concern.
- Understand and respect the viewpoints of others about issues of individual and public concern.