

Guide for Departments: GER Assessment

This document covers:

- GER Assessment Requirements
- GER Assessment Frequency Options
- GER Assessment Method Options
- GER Assessment Reporting
- GER Assessment Data: Who Sees It?

GER Assessment Requirements:

The APCC has stated the following requirements in annual GER Review memos distributed to department chairs:

*...a cycle of assessment should be established by the department or DLB that ensures complete coverage of all courses. **It is not acceptable to only begin gathering data during the review year.** Some portion of your GER courses should provide assessment data every year, and all courses should have provided some data by the time of the rotational review. For jointly taught courses, the offering programs should coordinate their assessment cycles. Courses that are rarely taught may need to be assessed every time to ensure coverage. At a minimum, every course should have all its GER outcomes assessed at least once every five years. (GER Review Memo, 2018)*

Following the [GER review schedule](#), Departments and DLBs are expected to submit assessment data to the APCC, including the following:

- a) brief description of the assessment process and measures used to collect data*
- b) summary of GER learning objective findings*
- c) description of how assessment data were used to monitor or modify GER course content*
- d) representative amount of the data collected*

(from the [GER Audit and Review Guidelines](#)).

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Options for Departments and DLBs to meet these expectations:

Assessment Frequency Options:

- 1) Ask all (or most) instructors teaching these courses to collect and report on one measure for a GER outcome each term. Particularly if these measures are **embedded** in existing exams or assignments that are aligned with the GER outcomes, pulling the data out and submitting it may only require *a few extra minutes* of the instructor's time. It is ideal to make assessment a regular part of teaching a GER course. The new reporting form allows individual instructors to submit GER data at the end of each course.
- 2) Establish a **rotation** in which **approximately 20% of your GER courses collect assessment data each year**, so that all courses are assessed on a 5 year cycle. A program or assessment coordinator in your department will need to ensure that the right courses are assessed each year, and that the instructors understand this requirement. For courses with multiple sections, data can be drawn from all sections or from a representative sample.
- 3) If the above options cannot be met, *accreditation* requirements can still be satisfied by assessing a **representative sample** of students and courses. This can be accomplished by selecting a subset of GER courses to be assessed, prioritizing the inclusion of high-enrollment, lower-level GER courses. Departments should assess **several of these courses per year** on a rotating basis.
- 4) Because assessment is meant to be part of a process of course improvement, it is acceptable and encouraged to re-assess the same course in successive years to **evaluate the effectiveness of changes to course content, pedagogy, or other changes**.

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Assessment Method Options:

Departments can develop common measures shared across courses or leave it up to individual instructors. Where standard measures exist (such as the [OWC-B rubric](#)), departments or instructors are free to adopt or adapt them to suit their needs, or to develop their own measures.

Good measures should *narrowly* measure learning on the GER outcome(s) and enable faculty to spot patterns of strong or poor performance on *specific* outcomes. For this reason, final **course grades are never acceptable as assessment data** (they measure overall student performance across *multiple* factors). For more information about acceptable measures, see [GER Assessment Best Practices](#).

You can also ask the assessment coordinator (andrewsa@uwm.edu) to help your department, or individual instructors teaching GER courses, identify appropriate and efficient assessment measures.

Assessment Reporting Options:

Academic Affairs has created a Qualtrics [reporting form](#) that can be completed by individual instructors after *each course*, or by a program director or coordinator for multiple courses at once, at least once per year.

If individual teachers report: Instructors are asked to offer thoughts about how their data might inform course content or pedagogical choices, or how it speaks to the effectiveness of prior curricular decisions. This option also alleviates some administrative overhead for departments, since data will come directly to Academic Affairs.

If a coordinator reports: The form allows supporting documents to be uploaded. In addition to the assessment data, you will need some evidence that faculty or instructors considered and responded to the assessment data (e.g., meeting minutes where data is discussed). Department coordinators should report GER data at least once per year.

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See the [Assessment of General Education](#) webpage for more information, and for links to the reporting form.

GER Assessment Data: Who Sees It?

Instructors: GER assessment data is first and foremost reflected on by the individual instructors who collected the data in the context of their courses. Because GER courses are generally decentralized at UWM, individual faculty and other **instructors “close the loop” locally, within their own courses.** The reporting form is designed to document this process.

Departments: Departments or programs may wish to consider their GER assessment data in order to make more systematic interventions in their GER courses. They can request their data from the assessment coordinator, both to discuss and respond to any patterns, and to compile their GER Review self-study.

The APCC: Members of the GER subcommittee will review assessment data from each department and provide feedback during the regular review cycle.

Assessment Coordinator: UWM’s assessment coordinator will also review data submitted using the Reporting Form to provide informal feedback to departments and instructors about their assessment processes and methods, especially considering expectations for accreditation.

HLC Accreditation Reviewers: Your GER assessment data may be reviewed as part of our accreditation process. HLC reviewers, however, are primarily looking for evidence of good assessment practices, and evidence that assessment is embedded in a process of reflecting on and improving course content in GER courses.