Qualitative Assessment Strategies:

While HLC requires that at least one assessment measure be "direct," this refers only to a *faculty member* evaluating a student-produced artifact or performance, to determine student proficiency in relation to specific learning outcomes. **It does *not* imply that the evaluation has to be *quantitative.*** Qualitative observations, when done systematically, also count as assessment "data."

This document summarizes a few qualitative assessment strategies for those seeking to avoid scores or ratings.

Qualitative Direct Measures

Qualitative Rubric:

Create a rubric that lists outcomes or traits with a brief description of the highest level of performance for each outcome, and then space for the reviewer to *comment* on the student's performance. No ratings are provided. The instructor reviews a set of student-produced artifacts (assignments, essays, etc) or performances, and fills out the rubric for each student. The form gives useful feedback to students in relation to specific learning outcomes (in this case, course outcomes aligned with program-level outcomes, or with GER outcomes such as UWS Shared Goals or GER divisional criteria).

The completed rubrics can be given to students as a form of feedback. To submit this as *assessment data*, the instructor creates an overall summary and analysis of the comments provided to students in the class, along with any observations or conclusions the instructor is drawing from them.

Trait Analysis:

The course instructor, while evaluating an assignment related to the GER or program outcome, **makes a list of traits in student work** [from the term in question, for each student in the course] **that they see as strengths and weaknesses related to the outcome.** Then they analyze their list to see what they've achieved and what is still lacking for the outcome. Report the list, and your conclusions, as assessment data.

Observation:

Some outcomes, such as the **UWS Shared Goal: Intercultural Knowledge and Competence**, or program goals related to the ability to work in teams, could -among other methods- potentially be assessed by observing student interactions (i.e., in small group work). The instructor systematically observes each student group, and takes notes about what is observed. They then write a summary and analysis of their observations, considering their observations in relation to the learning outcome and noting apparent successes or concerns. Analysis would consider how their course or pedagogy impacts the observed behavior or student practices, and how they could better help students demonstrate the kind of behaviors or practices the learning goal entails. This is submitted as their assessment data.

Qualitative Indirect Measures

HLC recommends the use of *indirect* measures (self-reported data from students) to supplement, and provide a more rounded view of, direct measures. The use of indirect measures (in *addition* to the required direct measure) is optional, but recommended.

Modified Course Evaluations:

While course evaluations typically focus on evaluating instruction, questions can be added that specifically collect indirect assessment data related to program or GER learning outcomes. Any questions asking for students to write a text response (open-ended), specifically addressing or describing what they learned in relation to particular learning goals, would be a qualitative indirect form of assessment. A summary and analysis of such data would need to be prepared and submitted as assessment data. Note: Modified course evals could also contain Likert-type questions, asking students to rate their confidence with a learning outcome, which are also useful indirect (but quantitative) measures.

Student Surveys:

Exit surveys for program assessment data, or student surveys given to students in a general education course, can produce valuable indirect assessment data. While such surveys can and often contain program or course evaluation questions, assessment questions will specifically ask students to **self-report their degree of learning or mastery for specific outcomes**. These can be quantitative (Likert-type questions) or qualitative (open-ended questions). A summary and analysis of this data would need to be prepared and submitted as assessment data (in addition to at least one direct measure).

Student Self-Evaluations or Reflections:

Any self-reporting student learning, when done in relation to specific learning outcomes, counts as indirect assessment data for accreditation purposes. This can include in-class reflective writing and formal or informal written student self-evaluations. While students can rate themselves using a rubric or a Likert-type scale, it is often useful for faculty to see how students describe their own understanding of their performance or learning in their own words. Student self-evaluations are more useful as indirect assessment data at the end of the term if they have done such self-evaluations previously in the course, and through feedback from their instructor, learned how to self-evaluate more accurately in relation to course outcomes. To use as assessment data, a summary and analysis of results is prepared and submitted as assessment data.

Interviews or Focus Groups:

Programs may wish to conduct exit interviews or periodic focus groups. These can provide both valuable program evaluation data as well as indirect assessment data. To serve as indirect assessment, students must be asked questions about their learning, degree of confidence with, or ability to use or apply learning related to specific learning outcomes.

More sophisticated methods of analyzing such data can involve coding student responses (UWM licensed software like nVivo can help), and can provide a valuable and objective breakdown of trends and patterns in your data. But these techniques are also labor intensive. For program assessment purposes, **a simple summary and analysis of trends or patterns noted by interviewers or focus group facilitators can be submitted as assessment data.**

Recommendation: Interviewers or facilitators should take notes during interviews or focus groups, or while reviewing recordings of them. Use at least **two** interviewers or facilitators, so that the summary and analysis isn't based only on a single person's perception.