

IMPROVING LEARNING IN GENERAL EDUCATION

An AGLS Guide to Assessment & Program Review



“AGLS’ ‘Improving Learning in General Education’ provides a rich set of practical questions that will help educators analyze, clarify, and measure the key processes that make general and liberal learning happen. Colleges and universities intentionally striving to strengthen the education they offer their students will find this “Guide” a powerful tool for continuous improvement.”

Stephen Spangehl, Director of AQIP
Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association

“AGLS and AAC&U share a deep conviction that the integrity of the general education program is a key indicator of the overall quality of students’ liberal education. Kudos to AGLS for these guiding questions that can help faculty create both strong purpose and best practice in general education.”

Carol Schneider, President
Association of American Colleges and Universities

48TH AGLS ANNUAL CONFERENCE: SEPTEMBER 25-27, ASHEVILLE, NC

AGLS: Systems Analysis of General Education

Institutional Choices

- C1** – To what common student learning objectives are we committed for all students, whether they are enrolled on campus or in distance education or dual credit courses? In addition to a major or a study in depth, what knowledge, values, and skills of inquiry—what some accreditors term “what the public expects of a college-educated person”—do we desire to see in our graduates?
- C2** – By what means do we ensure that these student learning objectives for general education align with our mission, vision, and philosophy?
- C3** – What practices do we use to ensure that our general education program meets the 21st-century expectations of our stakeholders in such areas as diversity, technology, and core inquiry skills for independent lifelong learning in a globalized environment?
- C4** – How do we provide leadership and resources (human and financial) for the general education program? By what means do we guarantee the centrality of general education in all our academic programs?

Action Steps

- A1** – How do our planning and operational processes for general education produce a curriculum that is purposeful, coherent, engaging, rigorous, and cumulative over the two or four years of our degree programs?
- A2** – What do we do to achieve our expectations for general education, and who is responsible for this action? How do we communicate our expectations to students and other stakeholders?
- A3** – How are course syllabi reviewed to assure that the common learning objectives are included in general education courses? How do we make departmental faculty knowledgeable about the purposes and goals of our general education program so they can reinforce and build on previous learning in their advanced courses?
- A4** – How do we establish faculty credentials for teaching general education? Do senior faculty participate in and take ownership of general education? Can junior faculty gain tenure by teaching in general education? What is our active program for orientation of new faculty, part-time faculty, and graduate assistants? How well do we provide professional development for all faculty involved in general education?
- A5** – How do we work to ensure that the faculty as a whole recognize and exercise collegial responsibility for the general education curriculum and its learning objectives?
- A6** – What methods do we use to connect and integrate learning in the major with general education, in an effort to educate students in multiple modes of inquiry?
- A7** – How do we involve the co-curricular experiences of students to help achieve the learning objectives for general education?
- A8** – How do our faculty use the general education learning objectives as standards for grading and otherwise evaluating student work?

A9 – What practices have we developed to identify and to assist students who have difficulty in meeting our general education learning objectives?

A10 – How do we monitor the preparation and learning outcomes of transfer students, both incoming and outgoing? How do we facilitate the transfer of general education credits? How do we monitor learning outcomes in dual-credit (high school—college) situations?

Informed Judgments

J1 – What measures of student success in meeting general education learning objectives do we regularly collect and study?

J2 – What is our evidence, beyond achieving a passing grade in required courses, that our graduates have acquired the knowledge and skills in general education expected by the institution and its stakeholders for the awarding of degrees?

J3 – How do our general education outcomes compare with those of peer institutions?

Further Improvements

I1 – To what extent do our faculty examine the results of assessment, discuss their implications, and use them to make improvements in the program?

I2 – How do we select goals for improvement in student learning? What specific improvement priorities are we now targeting, and what strategies are we employing to address them?

I3 – How do we communicate current assessment results and improvement priorities to students, faculty members, and other stakeholders?

The complete AGLS Guide includes:

- Explanation of the Continuous Quality Improvement Approach
- Discussion of Frequently Asked Questions
- Elucidations of each question, including a discussion of the theory and underlying principles
- Presentation of a list of useful resources for additional support of the review process

To Order the *AGLS Guide to Assessment and Progress Review*, to learn more about the Association for General and Liberal Studies, or to become an individual or institutional member of the organization, visit the AGLS website: www.agls.org

The Council for Administration of General and Liberal Studies (CAGLS) provides support for the increasing number of college and university administrators that have responsibility for institutional general/liberal education programs. CAGLS members meet twice annually, at the AGLS Conference and at the AAC&U General Education Conference. Information about CAGLS, its services, and membership can be found at: www.cstl.semo.edu/cagls

