

General Education Assessment Timelines

Last updated: 2/28/2023, as part of the Joint Committee on General Education Assessment’s annual report to the Faculty Senate

Penn State faculty have consistently reaffirmed their commitment to General Education as a core component of Penn State undergraduate education. With that commitment comes a shared responsibility to assess the effectiveness of the General Education curriculum. Administrative offices support this work and faculty participate by providing data from their courses, reviewing findings, and using these data to make continuous curricular improvements. In the years since the establishment of the Senate’s Standing Joint Committee for General Education Assessment, [this work has been shared](#) in an annual Senate report summarizing the work in this area and in a series of focused reports

In 2022–2023, the Committee reviewed the University’s General Education assessment progress against the timeline presented in the [January 2020 Curricular Affairs Report](#). It identified areas in which the University has not met these targets, largely due to the pause in assessment reporting implemented by the University while we adapted to the many changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also acknowledged the significant challenges inherent in developing scalable methods by which to assess seven Learning Objectives, five Knowledge Domains, and two Foundations in a curriculum with no single required course. As a result, the Committee revised the timeline and increased the number of Learning Objectives, Foundations, and Knowledge Domains assessed each year to enable the University to complete a full General Education assessment cycle in 2028–2029 (Table 1). The schedule includes the assessment of at least one Learning Objective per year, which prolongs the total number of years to complete a full cycle by extending the time it will take to cover the Foundations and Knowledge Domains. The purpose of doing so is to maintain the focus on and momentum behind assessing the Learning Objectives.

Table 1. General Education learning assessments timeline.

Assessed	Year
Learning Objective: Integrative Thinking	2018–2019
--Pandemic Pause--	2019–2021
Learning Objective: Effective Communication	2021–2022
Learning Objective: Creative Thinking Learning Objective: Global Learning	2022–2023
Learning Objective: Critical and Analytical Thinking - Learning Objective: Social Responsibility and Ethical Reasoning	2023–2024
Learning Objective: Integrative Thinking Domain: Natural Sciences (GN)	2024–2025
Domain: Arts (GA) Domain: Social and Behavioral Sciences (BS) Learning Objective: Effective Communication	2025–2026
Domain: Health and Wellness (GHW) Domain: Humanities (GH) Learning Objective: Creative Thinking	2026–2027
Foundation: Writing and Speaking (GWS) Foundation: Quantification (GQ) Learning Objective: Global Learning	2027–2028
Learning Objective: Key Literacies Learning Objective: Critical and Analytical Thinking	2028–2029

The assessment of the General Education Learning Objective “Key Literacies” is incorporated into the comprehensive assessment of the Domains and Foundations (Table 2).

Table 2. Example literacies from the Key Literacies Learning Objective mapped to the Domains and Foundations.

Example literacies	GWS	GQ	GA	GH	GHW	GN	GS
Textual	Yes	--	--	Yes	--	--	--
Quantitative	--	Yes	--	--	--	Yes	--
Information/technology	Yes	--	--	--	--	Yes	Yes
Health	--	--	--	--	Yes	Yes	--
Intercultural	--	--	Yes	Yes	--	--	Yes
Historical	--	--	Yes	Yes	--	--	Yes
Aesthetic	--	--	Yes	--	--	--	--
Linguistic	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Scientific	--	--	--	--	--	Yes	--

Another component of General Education assessment has been the ongoing development and analyses of several core data sets (Table 3). These analyses have improved our understanding of student enrollments in General Education, the relationship between General Education and undergraduate majors, student perceptions of General Education, student performance in General Education courses, and the intersections between General Education courses and Learning Objectives.

Table 3. Timeline for the update of the core General Education data sets.

Category	Last completed	Next scheduled	Planned periodicity
Update General Education course enrollment data set and analysis	2017–2018	2022–2023	Every 4 years
Map the relationships between General Education and undergraduate majors. Explore the level of General Education prescriptiveness in the majors.	2022–2023	2032–2033	Every 10 years
Student survey (dates subject to revision based on University survey calendar)	2018–2019	2024–2025	Every 5 years
Direct assessment of student performance on a subset of General Education Learning Objectives and/or foundation/Domain criteria	2021–2022	In progress for 2021–2022	Annually Learning Assessment table below
Map the General Education courses to General Education Learning Objectives	2019–2020	2029–2030	Every 10 years
<i>Possible alumni survey (need to complete a feasibility and cost-benefit analysis before moving forward with this)</i>	NA	TBD	Every 5-10 years