

# *The Benedictine College Assessment System*

*Policies, Procedures, and Related Documents*

**2018-2019**



The Benedictine College Assessment System (BCAS) is a set of policies and procedures used to document student learning so that the Benedictine College faculty can have access to data that support curriculum development at the institutional, program and course level.

*Policies* are marked as such; they have been approved by faculty vote and must be amended in the same way. Policies are implemented by the Assessment Committee, a standing committee of four elected faculty members and a staff member who also develop *procedures* and *documents* that aid in the process.

The BCAS was first developed during the 2009-2010 academic year. It was circulated to faculty during the fall of 2010, adopted and approved by faculty on February 8, 2011, and approved by the president's cabinet in May of 2011. Subsequent policy revisions have been approved by faculty vote.



## Contents

I. General Principles.....	1
Student Learning Goals.....	2
Analysis and Application.....	4
II. The General Education Program Assessment Plan.....	5
General Education Program Goals: Built on the Liberal Arts Pillar .....	5
Core Courses and Curriculum Areas .....	7
Glossary Definitions .....	7
Student Learning Goals.....	8
Curriculum Map.....	8
General Education Program Assessment Cycle.....	13
Analysis and Application.....	14
III. Program-Level Assessment of Student Learning: Majors, Minors and Other Programs .....	15
Department/Unit-level Assessment Plan (DUAP).....	15
Department/Unit-level Assessment and Review Cycle (DUAR).....	15
IV. Institution-Level Assessment of Student Learning.....	19
Institutional Data Reports .....	19
Internally-Developed Surveys .....	19
National/Standardized Surveys.....	21
Data Collection/Analysis/Presentation Calendar.....	21
Analysis and Application.....	22
Appendix A: An Inventory or Program-Level Assessment Tools.....	23
Appendix B: Assessment Committee Work.....	25
Appendix C: AAHE Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning .....	28
Appendix D: NILOA Transparency Framework .....	30
Glossary.....	31



# I. General Principles

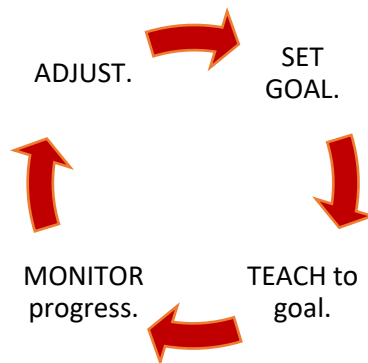
The assessment of student learning is a natural part of the process of instruction. In planning and designing a course of study—whether that course of study is a program (e.g., major program, minor program, General Education Program), a course sequence, a single course, a unit or a single lesson, we take many factors into consideration.

We first consider the overall goal: *What do I want students to know or be able to do as a result of this instruction?* As we develop our goal, we also think about conditions and degree: *Under what conditions and to what degree will a student demonstrate the target knowledge or skill?*

We take into account the current ability level of our students: *What do they know already? Are they prepared for this course of instruction?*

We also think about the best method(s) of instruction for the particular topic or skill. *What approaches will I use to help students understand? Will one approach work better than others?*

As we teach, we constantly assess. We do self-assessment (*Am I making sense?*). We do informal assessment and check for understanding (*Who remembers...?*). We do some low-stakes checking in the form of quizzes and smaller assignments. This is all part of formative assessment—the assessment that occurs as part of the teaching and learning process. At some point—the end of a unit, the end of a class, the end of a degree program—we perform a summative assessment. Summative assessments are often (though not necessarily) high-stakes events. For students, summative assessments are often linked to a course grade; instructors often use summative assessment to answer the question, *Did they get it?*



Assessment is never final. Even if it's happening at the end of a student's academic career—say, the last final exam before graduation—an assessment activity both answers existing questions (*Did they get it?*) and raises new ones (*What can I do differently next time?*). The new questions drive the next phase of the instruction/assessment cycle.

Since assessment is *part of* the instruction process and not separate from it, the person best qualified to make an assessment about student performance is the person who did the instruction in the first place. In other words, most good assessment activities are somehow embedded within the course of instruction.

## Student Learning Goals

The language of assessment can sometimes become an impediment to understanding among professional educators. What is called a *goal* at one institution might be an *outcome* or an *objective* at another. At Benedictine, we use these terms more or less interchangeably though the official term for the desired knowledge or skill unit is *Student Learning Goal*.

Every course has Student Learning Goals (SLGs). SLGs are generally specific to a particular course—set and measured by the instructor. However, courses that satisfy program requirements also include one or more SLGs tied to a program goal. Though there is no set or required number, undergraduate courses tend to have one or two SLGs for every credit hour of instruction.

SLGs should be measurable, which means they must be observable. *Understand the causes of the Civil War* is a weak learning goal. *List and explain three causes of the Civil War* is a strong one. The difference between “understand” on the one hand and “list and explain” on the other is that the latter describes behaviors that can be observed, measured and documented—no small matter when it comes to making decisions about a curriculum and its effectiveness over time.

Instructors give students feedback about their performance in a variety of ways; oftentimes this feedback also translates to a grade. When we rate students’ performance against a target, we are using (whether explicitly or implicitly) a rubric. A rubric can be a simple measure—as in:

“Everyone who participates in this activity will receive 10 points.”

A more detailed rubric might look like this:

“10 points for correct answer; 10 points for showing your work; 20 points total.”

In many cases, and especially for larger assignments, instructors present students with a detailed framework that both outlines the required elements of an assignment and describes the criteria for success on each element.

Here is a rubric used to evaluate students’ written communication skills on an assignment for a Spanish class.

**Figure 1: Written Communications Rubric (Spanish, Presentational Communication)<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b> 5 points	<b>Above Expectations</b> 4 points	<b>At Expectations</b> 3.5 points	<b>Not Quite There Yet</b> 3-2 points	<b>Still a Goal / Missing</b> 1-0 points
<b>Discourse</b>	-Writes a formal, objective academic composition or (research) paper of multiple paragraphs that is well organized and consists of connected complex sentences that flow smoothly and are rich in detail	-Writes a formal, objective academic composition or research paper of multiple paragraphs that is well organized and consists of connected complex sentences that flow smoothly and have good detail	-Writes a formal, objective academic composition or (research) paper that is organized and consists of connected complex sentences	- Writes an academic composition or (research) paper somewhat informally and/or subjectively; uses short paragraphs, some of which are not organized, and that consist of unconnected and/or simple sentences	- Writes an academic composition or (research) paper informally and/or subjectively; uses short, unorganized paragraphs, that consist of unconnected and/or simple sentences  - Missing
<b>Comprehensibility</b>	-Could be understood by a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives	-Could mostly be understood by a native speaker unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives.	-Could be readily understood by a native speaker used to non-natives	- Could be generally understood by a native speaker used to non-natives	- Difficult for a native speaker used to non-natives to understand  -Missing
<b>Language Use</b>	-Accurately and creatively uses only Spanish rich in detail and appropriate vocabulary and detail to write about formal, academic and unfamiliar topics offer opinions and arguments	- Accurately uses Spanish with a good variety of detail and appropriate vocabulary and detail to write about formal, academic and unfamiliar topics and to offer opinions and arguments	- Accurately uses Spanish with some variety of appropriate vocabulary and some detail to write about formal, academic and unfamiliar topics and to offer opinions and arguments	-Uses Spanish with little variety of appropriate vocabulary and/or detail; has difficulty writing about formal, academic and unfamiliar topics and offering opinions and arguments	-Uses Spanish with minimal variety of appropriate vocabulary and/or detail; unable to write about formal, academic and unfamiliar topics or to offer opinions and arguments  -Missing
<b>Language Control</b>	-Formulates specific arguments related to formal, academic topics; supports opinions; recommends; provides relevant explanations, arguments and comments; narrates in all major time frames and moods; all with detail, creativity and accuracy	-Formulates specific arguments related to formal, academic topics; supports opinions; recommends; provides relevant explanations, arguments and comments; narrates in all major time frames and moods; all with some detail and creativity, and with minimal errors in higher level forms	-Formulates specific arguments related to formal, academic topics; supports opinions; recommends; provides relevant explanations, arguments and comments; narrates in all major time frames and moods with few errors in forms studied	-Formulates only simple arguments related to formal, academic topics; mostly unable to support opinions, recommend and/or provide relevant explanations, arguments or comments, or to narrate in all major time frames and moods; many errors in forms studied	-Unable to formulate all but the simplest of arguments related to formal topics; unable to support opinions, recommend and/or provide explanations, arguments or comments, or to narrate in all major time frames and moods; numerous errors in forms studied
<b>Conventions &amp; Presentation</b>	-Precise presentation/format -Precise spelling, punctuation, capitalization	- Mostly precise presentation/format  -Mostly precise spelling, punctuation, capitalization	-Minimal mistakes in presentation /format  -Minimal mistakes in spelling, punctuation, capitalization	-Several mistakes in presentation /format -Several mistakes in spelling, punctuation, capitalization	-Numerous mistakes in presentation/format  -Numerous mistakes in spelling, punctuation, capitalization

<sup>1</sup> Julie Sellers, Written Communications Rubric, Spanish 102. Used by permission.

Instructors use rubrics to evaluate assignments and administer grades. Most rubrics, then, are seen only by the student and the instructor and thus provide assessment data at the course level only.

However, since assessment of student learning at the program level depends on data from different courses at various points in the curriculum, there are times when the rubrics must be reviewed by a larger body so they can be checked for alignment with Student Learning Goals and for calibration across multiple course sections.

## Analysis and Application

A key part of the assessment cycle is the process of interpreting the data and then using the information to make changes. Changes could happen in the curriculum itself, or they might relate more to the instructional methods used. Assessment data can point to misalignment of courses and prerequisites or even to broad deficiencies in the assumed student knowledge base. Ideally, it is the faculty who frame questions about student learning, react to the results, and, where appropriate, implement changes—whether at the course, program, or institutional level.

Analysis of assessment data in the General Education Program begins in the Assessment Committee, which collects data each semester and publishes the results in August and January in the *Report to the Faculty: The Assessment of Student Learning in the General Education Program*. The Assessment Committee makes recommendations of areas for further study, which are reviewed by the faculty at pre-semester in-service workshops. Faculty also make suggestions about areas in need of further study. Study often begins in informal working groups and then, depending on the findings, can result in changes at the course level or proposed changes at the program level. In most cases, program-level changes go through one of the faculty committees for further consideration and, if appropriate, full faculty vote. The General Education Program Assessment Plan is described in more detail in Part II.

Analysis of assessment data in the majors and minors happens at the department or unit level. Each department or unit has an Assessment Plan on file and is responsible for executing the specifics of that plan. The Assessment Committee reviews plans each fall and collects data each spring. This process is described in Part III.

Analysis of institution-level assessment data at the institutional level happens in many places. The Director of Institutional Research and Assessment manages the calendar for the collection of indirect assessment data in the form of surveys and other nationally-benchmarked studies and publishes raw data and summary reports on a Blackboard site. The Assessment Committee studies the reports and makes recommendations for future action. Depending on the issue, the recommendation may go straight to a committee within the faculty governance structure, or it may require more study at a Teaching Circle and/or by a working group of faculty volunteers. Institution-level assessment is outlined in Part IV.



## II. The General Education Program Assessment Plan

Benedictine College is heir to over 1,500 years of Benedictine dedication to learning. The Benedictine motto of *ora et labora*—prayer and work—and the love of learning in general can be traced back to the work in monastic *scriptoria*, where the preservation of manuscripts kept learning alive throughout the Middle Ages. The Benedictine heritage was evident in the earliest curricula at our two founding institutions—St. Benedict’s College, founded in 1858 by the monks of St. Benedict’s Abbey, and Mount St. Scholastica College, founded in 1924 by the sisters of Mount St. Scholastica Monastery. Although the specific requirements have continued to change since the merger of these two institutions in 1971, a continuity of purpose remains evident in the current General Education Program.<sup>2</sup> Cross-cutting themes related to wisdom lived out in responsible awareness of oneself and others, God and nature, and family and society form the basis of a liberal arts education delivered in academic programs based on a core of studies in the arts and sciences.

### General Education Program Goals: Built on the Liberal Arts Pillar

The mission of Benedictine College is the education of men and women within a community of faith and scholarship. The education is supported by four institutional pillars: *Catholic, Benedictine, Liberal Arts, and Residential*.

The themes of the General Education Program emerge from the Benedictine College mission statement’s explication of the Liberal Arts pillar.

[...] As a liberal arts college, Benedictine College is dedicated to providing a liberal arts education by means of academic programs based on a core of studies in the arts and sciences. Through these programs, the college guides students to refine their capacity for the *pursuit and acquisition of truth*, to appreciate the *major achievements in thought and culture*, and to understand the principles that *sound theoretical and practical judgment* require [...].<sup>3</sup>

Each of the three themes is illustrated with a general goal statement and reflected in a series of Thematic Learning Goals, broad target knowledge and skill sets for each Benedictine College graduate.

---

<sup>2</sup> The framework of the General Education Program was adopted in Academic Year (AY) 2002-2003. Because it represented a shift away from a course- or discipline-specific approach in most curricular areas, a faculty General Education Foundations Task Force developed a set of Glossary Definitions during the fall of 2002. Glossary Definitions were adopted by the faculty in December of 2002. Student Learning Goals were developed in assessment workshops during AY 2010-2011.

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis added. The orientation of the General Education Program around these three themes emerged from a multi-year discussion begun in AY1999-2000 and culminating in the formal approval of the General Education Program by the faculty and the Board of Directors in February of 2003. See <http://www.benedictine.edu/about/missionvalues/mission> for the complete mission statement.

**Figure 2: General Education Program Thematic Learning Goals<sup>4</sup>**

<p><b>General Education Theme I: Pursuit and Acquisition of Truth</b></p> <p>In completing this theme of the General Education Program, students will gain a deeper understanding of the truths inherent in their study of God (theology) and nature (natural world) and will acquire the skills and means to continue the pursuit and acquisition of truth after graduation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IA. Know Biblical, historical, traditional and sacramental tenets of Catholic theology and Catholic moral teaching.</li> <li>IB. Know factual information in natural sciences.</li> <li>IC. Understand and/or be able to apply the scientific method.</li> <li>ID. Apply mathematical or quantitative methods.</li> </ul>
<p><b>General Education Theme II: Major Achievements in Thought and Culture</b></p> <p>In completing this theme of the General Education Program, students will gain a greater appreciation for and understanding of the human family across time, culture and languages.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IIA. Be proficient in a foreign language.</li> <li>IIB. Be competent in historical understanding.</li> <li>IIC. Understand the process involved in creating aesthetic works, how various cultures influence these works, and how they are valued.</li> <li>IID. Demonstrate understanding of non-Western cultures.</li> <li>IIE. Demonstrate understanding of Western cultures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>General Education Theme III: Principles of Sound Theoretical and Practical Judgment</b></p> <p>In completing this theme of the General Education Program, students will develop the ability to distinguish coherent arguments and to formulate effective and persuasive responses to contemporary events.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IIIA. Communicate effectively in written, oral and visual formats.</li> <li>IIIB. Promote a healthy lifestyle.</li> <li>IIIC. Evaluate logical arguments and how to effectively address philosophical problems.</li> <li>IIID. Understand the thoughts of major philosophers.</li> <li>IIIE. Understand how to effectively address individual, group, and organizational problems.</li> <li>IIIF. Understand the relationship between the mission of the college and their educational program.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> The thematic language comes from the Benedictine College Assessment System, a policy document approved and adopted in the spring of 2011. The faculty began by articulating goals for General Education in light of the mission of the College, evaluating existing General Education requirements with reference to those goals, surveying alumni and employers regarding desired skills and knowledge, and researching various existing models of general education. Subsequently, the faculty developed and discussed a number of model programs. A task force used the results of this work to craft the program that the College eventually adopted. The explicit goal of the faculty throughout this process was to develop a general education program that was faithful to the mission statement while being responsive to contemporary needs.

## Core Courses and Curriculum Areas

The current Benedictine College General Education Program is a collection of core courses and curriculum areas that, when completed successfully, will help students achieve the 15 Thematic Learning Goals listed above.

One distinctive feature of the Benedictine College General Education Program is the three-tiered system of Core Courses and groups of courses or curriculum areas (6 groups called *Foundations*, and 7 groups called *Skills & Perspectives*).<sup>5</sup>

### The Core

The Core courses are classes that all students take. They are courses designed both to lay the foundation for a successful academic career and to clearly and explicitly communicate the mission of the College [...].

### Foundations

The Foundations are where Benedictine College most explicitly focuses on transmitting the specific purpose of the general education program: to refine students' capacity to pursue and acquire truth; to help them to appreciate the great achievements of thought and culture; and to develop their capacity to understand the principles of sound practical and theoretical judgment. The College does not require courses to be from specific departments (for example, history), but rather looks at the subject of the course (for example, art history or economic history also provide students with an "historical perspective" and thus fulfill the foundation). Benedictine College believes that it is essential that students are exposed to a wide variety of perspectives, thus even though a course may be listed in two different Foundations, each course can only be applied to one Foundation [...].

### Skills and Perspectives

The Skills and Perspectives courses are designed to ensure that the students are exposed to a variety of perspectives and learn the essential skills they will need for a successful life after college. Because the College believes that these things can be accomplished in a variety of ways and in almost any discipline, the intention is that they can be met through the general education program or the major, without any additional required hours. Students can be credited with up to three Skills and Perspectives (and one Foundation) in one course [...].

## Glossary Definitions

Each curriculum area has a Glossary Definition, a set of agreed-upon standard for courses that fit into one of the six Foundations or seven Skills & Perspectives curriculum areas. The original Glossary Definitions were written and approved by faculty vote in December of 2002. Subsequent modifications have been approved first by the Curriculum Committee and then by

---

<sup>5</sup> The text in the following sections (The Core, Foundations, Skills and Perspectives) comes from the current version of the *Catalog*. Specific course requirements have been replaced here with ellipses.

full faculty vote. Glossary Definitions are listed in the second column of the Curriculum Map below (Current as of August 1, 2015. Subsequent updates will show up on the Faculty Forum Blackboard site as they are approved).

All courses in the General Education Program curriculum areas must meet the Glossary Definitions. The Curriculum Committee reviews each course upon its initial entry into the General Education Program. These courses also undergo a process of revalidation every three years according to the Assessment Committee's General Education Data Collection Cycle described below. During revalidation, the Curriculum Committee first asks department chairs to recommend a course's continued presence in (or removal from) the General Education Program and then makes a determination as to whether or not the course still meets the Glossary Definition, focusing particularly on courses that have undergone substantial revision since their last review.

## Student Learning Goals

Each core course and curriculum area in the General Education Program has one or more Student Learning Goals. The original Student Learning Goals were written and approved by faculty vote during AY 2009-2010. Subsequent modifications have been approved first by the Assessment Committee and then by full faculty vote. SLGs are listed in the third column of the Curriculum Map below. (Current as of August 1, 2015. Subsequent updates will show up on the Faculty Forum Blackboard site as they are approved.)

Every course in the General Education Program must include among at least one General Education Program SLG for each of the areas in which it is situated. For example, *United States History Since 1865* (Hi213) meets two General Education Program requirements: Historical Perspectives (HP) and Western Perspective (WP). This means that, in addition to any other SLGs an Hi213 instructor publishes on the syllabus, there must be at least one goal each from HP and WP. Those SLGs will be the target goals for the data collection and analysis for that semester.

In the case of multiple sections of the same course, departments are encouraged to strive for agreement on at least one SLG across all sections so that assessment results will provide meaningful information about student learning in the *course* rather than about a particular instructor's approach to the course.

## Curriculum Map

The Curriculum Map on the following pages shows the connection between the General Education Program Goals, the courses or curriculum areas responsible for delivering these goals, and the Student Learning Goals associated with each core course or curriculum area.

**Figure 3**  
**General Education Program**  
**Thematic Goals, Core Course Descriptions, Glossary Definitions, and Student Learning Goals**  
**August 1, 2015**

<b>Theme I: Pursuit and Acquisition of Truth</b>	<b>In completing this theme of the General Education Program, students will gain a deeper understanding of the truths inherent in their study of God (theology) and nature (natural world) and will acquire the skills and means to continue the pursuit and acquisition of truth after graduation.</b>	<b>IA. Know Biblical, historical, traditional and sacramental tenets of Catholic theology and Catholic moral teaching.</b>	<p><b>Introduction to Theology (Th 101)</b>  This course is an examination of the origins, development, beliefs, and practices of Christian tradition and initiates students into the methods and discipline of theology. Special attention will be given to the course of salvation history as narrated in the Bible, the content of the Catholic faith as set for in the creeds, and the Christian way of life. The relevance of Christianity in our contemporary society and the distinctiveness of the Christian vision of the world will also be explored. (<i>Catalog</i>, p. 296)</p> <p><b>Student Learning Goal:</b>  1. Understand the truths of the Catholic faith as revealed in scripture and tradition.</p>
		<b>IB. Know factual information in natural sciences.</b>	<p><b>Faith (F)</b>  Students in these courses will demonstrate an understanding of the truths of the Christian, Catholic faith as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, knowledge of the relationship between faith and reason, knowledge of other religious traditions, the principles of a spiritual life and their expression in worship, prayer and action, and the application of religious principles to other aspects of human experience.</p> <p><b>Student Learning Goals:</b>  1. Display an understanding of the meaning of the Christian creeds.  2. Demonstrate knowledge of the Old and/or New Testaments.  3. Display an understanding of specific principles of Catholic moral teaching.</p>
		<b>IC. Understand and/or be able to apply the scientific method.</b>	<p><b>Understanding the Natural World (NW)</b>  Courses that fulfill this foundation show how physical and biological elements profoundly influence all aspects of human life and are in turn influenced by human activities. Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the physical and biological components of the world. Courses fulfilling this foundation component must be taken in two different departments. At least one course must provide significant experience with the methods of laboratory science.</p> <p><b>Student Learning Goals:</b>  1. Demonstrate the ability to apply the scientific method.  2. Demonstrate factual knowledge of contemporary natural science.  3. Apply contemporary scientific models to describe the natural world</p>
			<p><b>Scientific Method (SM)</b>  Courses that count toward this requirement devote significant attention to elements of the scientific method including hypothesis formulation and testing, experimental design, and systematic observation of natural phenomena. A course will count toward the scientific method requirement of the General Education Program if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 20% of in-class instructional time (i.e., the equivalent of 6-8 hours of class time) is based on assignments the purpose of which is to develop the student's ability to apply the techniques of the scientific method including hypothesis formulation and testing, experimental design, and systematic observation of natural phenomena; OR</li> <li>• At least 10% of in-class instructional time (i.e., the equivalent of 3-4 hours of class time) is devoted to explaining (i.e., developing student knowledge of) the nature and content of the scientific method including hypothesis formulation and testing, experimental design, and systematic observation of natural phenomena.</li> </ul> <p><b>Student Learning Goals:</b>  1. Demonstrate the ability to understand the techniques of the scientific method.  2. Demonstrate the ability to apply the techniques of the scientific method.</p>

		<p>ID. Apply mathematical or quantitative methods.</p>	<p><b>Mathematical Reasoning (MR)</b>  <b>Glossary Definition:</b> Courses that fulfill this requirement focus primarily on the theory and application of college-level mathematical and/or statistical concepts and skills. These courses will investigate the use of mathematical reasoning and mathematical methods to solve problems. Students will demonstrate understanding by applying appropriate mathematical methods to solve novel problems arising in mathematics or other disciplines, and will be required to understand the theory underlying multiple mathematical concepts and techniques.  <b>Three terminology clarifications complete this definition:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Application</i> as used here is not limited to the application of the mathematics to some concrete domain outside of mathematics. It may also include the application of mathematical concepts and skills to more advanced mathematical problems or the development of further skills.</li> <li>• <i>College-level</i> as used here indicates content that goes beyond the typical minimum requirements for high-school graduation, e.g. algebra topics that extend beyond algebra of two variables.</li> <li>• <i>Novel problems</i> as used here indicates a problem unlike those previously studied, but requiring concepts and skills that have been studied. The goal of this language is to encourage understanding of a theory and rule out mere memorization of a technique.</li> </ul> <p><b>Student Learning Goals:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate the ability to correctly use and explain mathematical concepts and skills.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate understanding of when and how to apply mathematical reasoning to novel problems arising in mathematics or other disciplines.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Theme II: Major Achievements in Thought and Culture</b></p>	<p>In completing this theme of the General Education Program, students will gain a greater appreciation for and understanding of the human family across time, culture and languages.</p>	<p>IIA. Be proficient in a foreign language.</p>	<p><b>Foreign Language Courses</b>  The two-course series is designed to develop students' basic ability to communicate in the target language and gain understanding and appreciation of the culture of other peoples.  <b>Student Learning Goals:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Speak in a foreign language.</li> <li>2. Write in a foreign language.</li> </ol>
		<p>IIB. Be competent in historical understanding.</p>	<p><b>Historical Perspectives (HP)</b>  Courses that fulfill this foundation will focus on the impact of historically significant events, ideas, and cultural contributions on the development of world civilizations. Students in these courses will be required to demonstrate their understanding of the diversity of human experience and thought, their ability to evaluate the impact of past developments and achievements on their own cultural traditions, and their recognition of the contributions of various historical communities to an interdependent global culture. (rev. 11/13)  <b>Student Learning Goals:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate an understanding of the period covered in class through historical development of events, ideas, or cultural contributions.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate knowledge of historical cause and effect.</li> <li>3. Demonstrate multiple historical interpretations.</li> </ol>
		<p>IIC. Understand the process involved in creating aesthetic works, how various cultures influence these works, and how they are valued.</p>	<p><b>Aesthetic Experience (AE)</b>  Courses that fulfill this foundation have as their focus the study of creative expression. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the ways in which literature and the fine arts represent differing perceptions of beauty and convey values and beliefs of the members of particular societies. (rev. 11/13)  <b>Student Learning Goals:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate the way that an artistic creation reflects specific cultural values.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate an understanding of the processes of creating an aesthetic work.</li> <li>3. Analyze and interpret an artistic creation.</li> </ol>

	IID. Demonstrate understanding of non-Western cultures.	<p><b>Global Perspective (GP)</b>          Courses that count toward this requirement devote significant attention to cultures and communities outside the Western European tradition. Courses that count toward this requirement devote significant attention to cultures and communities outside the Western European tradition. A course will count toward the global perspective requirement of the General Education Program if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the course, at least 50% of each student’s course grade is based on assignments whose purpose is to develop or demonstrate student knowledge, understanding, or application of major ideas from non-Western cultural traditions; i.e., in such cultural traditions as those of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, or indigenous peoples of various world regions; OR</li> <li>• The course draws at least ten major reading assignments from sources the primary subject of which is the survey, analysis, or application of concepts, theories, or methods whose origin lie principally outside of the Western cultural tradition; i.e., in such cultural traditions as those of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, or indigenous peoples of various world regions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Student Learning Goal:</b>          1. Demonstrate knowledge, understanding, or application of major ideas from non-Western traditions (i.e. Native Americans, Asian, African, Middle Eastern, etc.).</p>
	IIE. Demonstrate understanding of Western cultures.	<p><b>Western Perspective (WP)</b>          Courses that count toward this requirement devote significant attention to cultures and communities in the Western European tradition. Courses that count toward this requirement devote significant attention to cultures and communities in the Western European tradition. A course will count toward the Western Perspective requirement of the General Education Program if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the course, at least 50% of each student’s course grade is based on assignments the purpose of which is to develop or demonstrate student knowledge, understanding, or application of major ideas from the Western cultural tradition; OR</li> <li>• The course draws at least ten major reading assignments from sources the primary subject of which is the survey, analysis, or application of concepts, theories, or methods, the origins of which lie principally within the Western cultural tradition.</li> </ul> <p><b>Student Learning Goal:</b>          1. Demonstrate knowledge of, understanding of, or an ability to apply major ideas of Western cultural tradition.</p>

<b>Theme III: Principles of Sound</b>	In completing this theme of the General	IIIA. Communicate effectively in written, oral and visual formats.	<p><b>English Composition (En 100 or En 101)</b>          (En101) This is an intensive course in expository writing, required of all students except those achieving exceptional scores on the College Level Examination Programs tests or other tests designed by the department. Some attention is given to basic skills, but primary emphasis is on effective written communication. The major modes of discourse in the fundamentals of research are covered thoroughly. Students may not get credit for both this course and En 100. (<i>Catalog</i>, p. 168)</p> <p><b>Student Learning Goals:</b>          1. Communicate effectively through expository writing.</p>
---	---	--	--

			<p><b>Written Communication (WC)</b>  Courses that count toward this requirement include significant attention to the writing process, including classroom instruction in writing skills and opportunity to rewrite a significant piece of writing. A course will count toward the written communication requirement of the General Education Program if all of the following statements are true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Altogether, the course requires students to write more than 3,000 words—i.e., roughly ten double-spaced pages—of original writing outside of class.</li> <li>• In the course, students must complete a piece of writing which alone represents 10% of each student’s course grade. Students receive instructor feedback relevant to this piece of writing and an opportunity thereafter to revise the piece.</li> <li>• The course devotes at least 10% of in-class instructional time (i.e., the equivalent of about 3-4 hours of class time) to instruction in writing skills.</li> </ul> <p><b>Student Learning Goals:</b>  1. Communicate effectively through expository writing.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Oral Communication (OC)</b>  Courses that count toward this requirement include significant attention to oral communication, including classroom instruction on techniques of effective oral communication and guided practice in at least one significant oral presentation. A course will count toward the oral communication requirement of the General Education Program if both of the following statements are true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The course devotes at least 10% of in-class instructional time (i.e., the equivalent of about 3-4 hours of class time) to instruction in oral presentation skills, including the theory and techniques of effective oral communication, and practice in oral presentation;</li> <li>• The course provides students with guided practice in at least one oral presentation constituting at least 10% of the overall grade. (rev. 04/15)</li> </ul> <p><b>Student Learning Goals:</b>  1. Demonstrate understanding of oral communication skills, techniques, or theory  2. Demonstrate effective use of oral communication skills.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Visual Communication (VC)</b>  Courses that count toward this requirement devote a significant component to an understanding of visual communication and a significant proportion of the semester grade is devoted to the production of an effective example of visual communication. A course will count toward the visual communication requirement of the General Education Program if the following statements are true:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The course devotes in-class instructional time to instruction in visual communication. (This can be specific to the medium or discipline of the class.)</li> <li>• At least 10% of the semester grade for the course is based on students’ production of examples of visual communication.</li> </ul> <p><b>Student Learning Goal:</b>  1. Produce an example of effective visual communication.</p>
		<p>IIIB. Promote a healthy lifestyle.</p>	<p><b>Wellness for Life (Pe 115) + Activity Class</b>  This course provides students with information, skills and strategies to promote wellness for life. It is designed to provide opportunities for the student to discover and to choose healthy lifestyles. This is the physical education general education requirement for all students. (<i>Catalog</i>, p. 182)</p> <p><b>Student Learning Goal:</b>  1. Recognize best practices for a healthy lifestyle.</p>
		<p>IIIC. Evaluate logical arguments and how to effectively address philosophical problems.</p>	<p><b>Principles of Nature (Ph 175)</b>  This course gives a philosophical account of the existence, principles, and causes of change as it is found in natural things. Particular attention is given to change of substance and purpose in nature. At appropriate places, consideration is given to contemporary discussions of these issues. The course also introduces students to the logical methods and distinctions needed to address such questions. Students are not able to take both Ph 175, Principles of Nature and Ph 231, Philosophy of Nature for credit. (<i>Catalog</i>, p. 247)</p> <p><b>Student Learning Goal:</b>  1. Supply a philosophical account of the principles and causes of change as it is found in natural things.</p>



<p>IIID. Understand the thoughts of major philosophers.</p>	<p><b>Philosophical Inquiry (PI)</b>  Students in these courses will demonstrate their ability to think logically, to make sound judgments about primary principles of thought and action, to understand the basic principles required to make practical and theoretical judgments, and to understand the thought of major philosophers.  <b>Student Learning Goals:</b>  1. Evaluate philosophical arguments (in terms of logical soundness) drawn from the subject matter of the course.  2. Understand the thought of 2-3 major philosophers (as distinct from historical, psychological, literary understanding).  3. Understand first principles and methodologies as necessary to address philosophical problems related to the subject matter of the course.</p>
<p>IIIE. Understand how to effectively address individual, group, and organizational problems.</p>	<p><b>Person and Community in the Contemporary World (PC)</b>  Courses that fulfill this foundation seek to understand the individuals, groups, and organizations that make up society in its various themes. Students will examine the behavior and mental processes of individuals, goals of social interaction and institutions, how contemporary societies are structured, and how different social structures engage such fundamental principles as liberty and equality.  <b>Student Learning Goals:</b>  1. Identify appropriate empirical methods used in the acquisition of knowledge relevant to an issue involving individuals, groups, or organizations that make up society in its various dimensions.  2. Use at least one theory involving individuals, groups, or organizations to explain a relevant discipline-specific issue.  3. Develop a solution to a contemporary individual social, or institutional problem based on appropriate disciplinary theory or practice.</p>
<p>IIIF. Understand the relationship between the mission of the college and their educational program.</p>	<p><b>The Benedictine College Experience (Gs 150)</b>  This course, required during the first semester of enrollment, is designed to give students an understanding and appreciation of the value of a Catholic, Benedictine, liberal arts college in a residential, Discovery College setting. It will explore major themes that extend throughout all of a liberal arts education to prepare students to make the best possible use of their Benedictine College social, intellectual, and personal endeavors. (<i>Catalog</i>, p. 177)  <b>Student Learning Goal:</b>  1. Understand the relationship between the mission of the college and the educational program.</p>

## General Education Program Assessment Cycle

The Assessment Committee establishes cycles for the regular collection of General Education assessment data. A three-year cycle was established in the fall of 2013, with each year devoted to one of the three themes from the mission statement:

- 2016-2017: Theme II: Major Achievements in Thought and Culture
- 2017-2018: Theme III: Principles of Practical and Theoretical Judgment
- 2018-2019: Theme I: Pursuit and Acquisition of Truth

At certain collection points during each semester, faculty members submit the following to the Assessment Committee for the targeted General Education course(s) they teach:

**Figure 4: General Education Program Data Collection Calendar**

<i>Fall Collection</i>	<i>Spring Collection</i>	<i>Item(s) or Information Collected (Email requests will come from the Office of Institutional Research &amp; Assessment)</i>	<i>Assessment Committee Review</i>
August	January	Instructors identify the Student Learning Goal that will be assessed (chosen from the relevant section[s] above)	N/A
September	February	Instructors provide a description of the activity that will demonstrate mastery of the Student Learning Goal.	Check for alignment of SLG and activity.
October	March	Instructors submit the rubric that will be used to assess performance on the activity.	Check for alignment of rubric and SLG.
January 1	June 1	Instructors submit a summary of student rubric scores on the activity.	Check for variance among sections of the same course, between distribution in individual courses and for the curriculum area, between distribution in current semester and previous semesters. Prepare report of current and historical data; make recommendations about areas for future study.
January 1	June 1	Instructors submit copies of student work that represent acceptable and unacceptable performance (as evaluated on the rubric).  (only if announced at the beginning of the semester <sup>6</sup> )	(If applicable, work with faculty on calibration or other issues.)

## Analysis and Application

General Education Program assessment materials are reviewed regularly by the Assessment Committee according to the guidelines in the chart above.

Results of alignment checks are shared with individual instructors—formally by letter at the end of each term and informally as needed throughout the semester.

Results on the rubric score distribution and comparative analysis are shared with the entire

<sup>6</sup> Beginning in Fall of 2013, copies of student work are only being collected in two cases: new instructors and in specific targeted areas where more additional information is needed (usually, when inter-rater reliability is low).

faculty in a document called *Assessment of Student Learning in the General Education Program: A Report to the Faculty*, which is published on the BC-Assessment Blackboard site in the weeks before the beginning of the next semester. Rubric score distributions are reported for each targeted core course and curriculum area, along with historical data from the same. This publication also includes recommendations about curriculum change and, when relevant, updates on progress.

### **III. Program-Level Assessment of Student Learning: Majors, Minors and Other Programs**

The assessment of student learning in major programs (as well as programs that do not lead to majors) is the responsibility of the relevant units and/or home departments.

The Assessment Committee takes responsibility for ensuring that each unit or department has an Assessment Plan on file, collects and analyzes student assessment data according to its own plan, and then uses the information gained to make changes to major (and other) program curriculum as warranted.

As with assessment in the General Education Program, assessment in major/minor/other programs has become cyclical so that not every program performs the same steps every year.

#### **Department/Unit-level Assessment Plan (DUAP)**

The Department/Unit-level Assessment Plan (DUAP) is updated and maintained by the department/unit and updated as needed. Whenever updates are made, the revised DUAP is sent to the Assessment Committee for review and comment. In some cases, the Assessment Committee will recommend or require changes.

In general, all DUAPs include a unit mission statement, a set of program goals, and a set of Student Learning Goals for each program goal. The Student Learning Goals are then mapped to particular assessment strategies (some direct, some indirect), including frequency of use for each strategy, person responsible for administering and collecting, a description of acceptable performance, and the target success rate.

The department or unit executes the plan and gives the Assessment Committee an annual update (normally in the spring) of its progress on one of the SLGs. The update includes the actual success rate and the curricular changes (if any) implemented as a result of what has been learned from the data.

#### **Department/Unit-level Assessment and Review Cycle (DUAR)**

The Department- and Unit-Level Assessment and Review (DUAR) cycle was implemented in the fall of 2014 as a strategy for allowing units to focus less on report-writing and more on the assessment of student learning in the programs they offer.<sup>7</sup>

A pilot group will advise the Assessment Committee about a workable structure for the DUAR cycle and format for the report; however, the following is general outline for guidance:

---

<sup>7</sup> Departments continuing on the old cycle will continue with the usual requirements: mission statement, program outcomes, student learning goals, assessment methods along with frequency of use, timeline for assessment, benchmarks for success on each student learning goal, and the most recent assessment data set.

## Figure 5: Department/Unit-Level Assessment and Reporting Cycle

### *Transition Year:*

- Read and review report of existing data.

### *Year 5:*

- Review (reaffirm or revise) mission statement.
- Compose or revise Department-/Unit-level Assessment Plan (DUAP)
- For each program housed in the unit, make (or reaffirm) program learning outcomes (including assessment methods and targets)
  - Design curriculum map showing relationship among required courses or categories and the embedded student learning goals, program-level learning outcomes.
  - Develop 2-3 action research questions about student learning in at least one program the unit oversees (to be carried out during Years 1-4).

### *Years 1, 2, and 3:*

- Data collection for action research question. Data summary and analysis at unit level.

### *Year 4:*

- Data collection for action research question (optional—if needed for analysis).
- Data summary and analysis at unit level
- Summary/results submitted to Assessment Committee. (“Program-level Assessment Report” [PLAR])

The Assessment Committee will review the Program-level Assessment Reports (PLARs) (submitted in Year 4) and present a summary at the Fall Faculty Workshop.

Units and departments are in the process of determining when to make the transition. Those with external accreditors will follow a modified schedule based on their place in the external accreditation cycle.

The First Cohort (Transition Year=2014-2015) included the following units:

- Art Department
- School of Business
- ESL & International Studies Program
- Journalism & Mass Communications Department
- World and Classical Languages and Cultures Department (previously Modern Foreign & Classical Languages Department)
- Psychological Sciences Department
- Sociology & Criminology Department

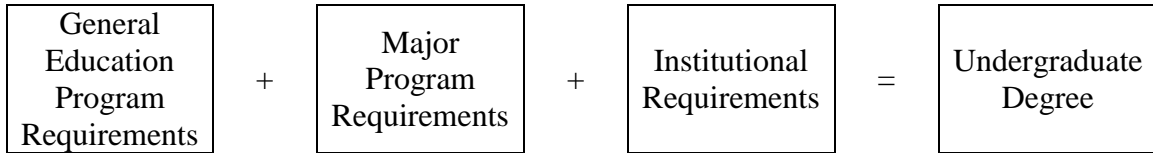
The programs with external accreditation cycles:

- Athletic Training: Accredited through 2019-2020 year
- Education: Accredited through 2020-2021 year; CAEP Visit, Fall 2020
- Engineering: Mechanical Engineering accreditation decision due August 2016; Chemical, Civil, and Electrical Engineering seeking accreditation by 2019-2021
- Music: Accredited through 2018-2019 year; NASM Visit, 2018-2019
- Nursing: Accredited through 06/30/2017; CCNE Visit, Fall 2016



## IV. Institution-Level Assessment of Student Learning

Students who successfully complete an undergraduate degree at Benedictine College complete at least two programs' worth of study, along with other institutional requirements (such as the required number of earned credit hours and the achievement of the required G.P.A.):



Because the learning that occurs on the road to the undergraduate degree is more than just a sum of these parts, however, the faculty monitor and assess student learning at the institutional level through a variety of indirect measures such as surveys, retention and completion rates, and rates of graduate school attainment and career placement.

The Assessment Committee processes and summarizes both institutional data reports and published survey results according to the Institution-level Assessment Calendar.

### Institutional Data Reports

Beginning in the fall of 2015, the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment will publish on the BC-Assessment and/or BC-InstitutionalResearch Blackboard sites the following reports that relate directly or indirectly to the assessment of student learning at the institutional level:

1. Grade Distribution Reports (by General Education core course and curriculum area)
2. Retention Reports (Retention by Semester, Voluntary Exit Demographics, Exit Reasons)
3. Persistence to Graduation Report
4. Graduate School Attainment Report

### Internally-Developed Surveys

Two internally-developed and administered surveys relate to academic assessment and will be reviewed by the Assessment Committee beginning in fall of 2015 (included is the information sought along with the *target group and frequency*):

#### Exit Survey

*Voluntarily departing students; upon departure*

The Exit Survey asks departing students about their general satisfaction with the college and their reasons for leaving.

#### Senior First Destination Survey

*Seniors; during graduation year*

The Senior First-Destination Survey gives the initial percentage of graduates who are employed or are going to graduate or professional school.



## National/Standardized Surveys

Following is the list of national/standardized surveys Benedictine College participates in that relate directly or indirectly to the assessment of student learning (included is the information sought along with the *target group and frequency*):

### CIRP Freshman Survey (TFS)

*First-time first-year students; each fall semester*

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Freshman Survey "covers a wide range of student characteristics: parental income and education, ethnicity, and other demographic items; financial aid; secondary school achievement and activities; educational and career plans; and values, attitudes, beliefs, and self-concept."

### Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)

*Faculty; alternate even-numbered spring semesters (2014, 2018, etc.)*

FSSE measures faculty perceptions of student behaviors described in the NSSE.

### HEDS Alumni Survey

*5<sup>th</sup>- and 10<sup>th</sup>-year Alumni; each fall*

The HEDS Alumni Survey focuses on alumni perceptions of their academic development during and after college.

### HEDS First-Destination Survey

*1<sup>st</sup>-year Alumni; each fall (begins fall 2015)*

The HEDS First-Destination Survey provides updated information about students' graduate school attainment and employment rates during the year after graduation.

### IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction System

*Students in targeted classes; each semester*

The IDEA (Individual Development and Educational Assessment): SRI provides feedback to instructors on students' perceptions of their own progress on 12 learning objectives, with emphasis on the items ranked as "essential" or "important." Includes institutional and benchmarking reports.

### National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

*First-time first-year students and seniors; even-numbered springs*

The NSSE is an indirect assessment tool that measures student participation in behaviors and processes linked to learning.

### Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)

*Degree-seeking undergraduates; odd-numbered springs*

SSI reports students' expectations and satisfaction in 12 key areas: Academic Advising Effectiveness, Campus Support Services, Concern for the Individual, Instructional Effectiveness, Admissions and Financial Aid Effectiveness, Registration Effectiveness, Responsiveness to Diverse Populations, Safety and Security, Student Centeredness.

## Data Collection/Analysis/Presentation Calendar

Key: [ =Beginning of a Data Collection Cycle for Next Report  
 [ =Beginning of a Data Collection Cycle for Next Report  
 D=Data Collection in Progress  
 P=Preliminary Report Delivered to Assessment Committee  
 A=Assessment Committee Reviewing and Analyzing Data  
 S=Assessment Committee Publishes Summary of Data and Results

	August		September		October		November		December		January		February		March		April		May		June		July	
CIRP TFS		[D	D	D]								R	A	A	A	S								
Exit Survey	D	D	D]	[D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
						PA	A	S																
Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) (alternate even springs only)								P	A	A	S					[D	D	D]						
Grade Distribution Report			A	S					[D]	P			A	A					[D]	P				
Graduate School Attainment Report					[D]	P	A	S																
HEDS First-Destination Survey	P	P	A	S				[D	D]															
HEDS Alumni Survey	P	P	A	S				[D	D]															
IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction			A	S				[D	D]			P	A		S			[D	D]		P			
National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (even springs only)								P	A	A	S					[D	D	D]						
Noel-Levitz Survey of Student Satisfaction (SSI) (odd springs only)																[D	D	D]	PA	S				
Persistence to Graduation Report	[D]	P	A	S																				
Retention Reports (Rates and Demographics Data)				[D]		P	A	A					[D]		P	A	S							
Senior First-destination Survey	D	A	S					D	D									D	D	D	D]	P		
																							[D	

## Analysis and Application

The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA) publishes preliminary report data for each of these surveys or collections (whether from an external source or made in house) on either the BC-Assessment or BC-InstitutionalResearch Blackboard site. In cases where open-ended responses are allowed, the OIRA will work with the chair of the Assessment Committee will redact references to specific individuals. The committee reviews the data (during the period marked “A” on the chart) and then publishes a summary (marked “S”) for faculty consideration and review. Faculty responses to the reports go through the regular committee and governance system. (Note that in most cases, these reports address items that relate to other areas in addition to academic affairs, such as Student Life or Facilities, so that comment and review will often come from several offices.)

# Appendix A: An Inventory of Program-Level Assessment Tools

Because of the diversity of programs offered at Benedictine College, assessment methods and measures vary widely. An inventory of program-level methods is below:

## Alumni Surveys

The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment conducts alumni surveys at 1, 5, and 10 years post-graduation. Departments and units receive data related to their program completers and may use the information to modify curriculum or instructional strategies. They may also send freestanding alumni surveys related to specific program goals.

## Course-embedded Assessments

The most fundamental type of assessment of student learning measures student performance on a given task—an assignment, a presentation, an exam, a recital, a speech, etc. Student achievement on these assessments is usually reported in the form of rubric scores. In cases of multiple sections of the same course, departments/units are encouraged to do some kind of internal calibration on a common rubric.

## Curriculum Mapping & Analysis

Faculty review program curricula regularly at department meetings. Systematic reviews of course syllabi, textbooks, exams, and other materials help clarify learning outcomes, explore differences and similarities between course sections, and/or determine the effectiveness of instructional materials. While these reviews are ongoing, they are done in a more formal and public way during Year 4 of the Department-/Unit-level Assessment and Review Cycle (DUAR).

## Employer Surveys

Departments and academic units may send surveys to their graduates' employers. Such surveys help faculty determine the degree to which students have met program goals related to employment.

## Exit Interviews or Surveys

When possible, the Director of Student Success conducts exit interviews with students in person and directs them to the online survey. Students who leave without completing the interview are invited to complete the survey online. The results point to reasons for leaving and general satisfaction.

## IDEA Group/Institutional Summary Reports

The IDEA reports of group and institutional averages help units evaluate distribution of skills and outcomes in various classes in a program curriculum.

## Institutional Data

The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment can, at the department or unit's request, provide breakdowns of data such as GPA, grade distribution, graduation and retention rates, instructor workload, and many other items. Faculty use the data for program development and review.

### Interviews

Some units interview students at key points during their program and analyze responses qualitatively or with a standard rubric.

### Portfolios

Portfolios contain collections of student work, whether across course sections or over time. Portfolios often contain samples of graded work for readers to review; however, they may also be submitted to external readers for blind review.

### Senior Comprehensive Exam

The successful completion of a Senior Comprehensive Exam in the major field is a graduation requirement. The exam can be a field-specific standardized exam, one of the ETS Major Field Tests (MFT), or an internally-developed exam. Item analysis of these exams provides insight into strengths in curriculum delivery as well as gap areas for future attention.

### Senior Recital/Performance/Show

Some programs require graduating seniors to demonstrate their learning through a public performance and then evaluate on a standard rubric.

### Senior Seminar

Some programs require graduating seniors to enroll in a capstone seminar experience. Here, the skills of the prospective graduate can be assessed through exams, essays, projects, and other activities.

### Senior Thesis

Some programs require graduating seniors to demonstrate their learning in a culminating thesis, the grade for which comes either from the thesis itself or from a combination of the written thesis and an oral defense.

### Senior Survey

The Office of Institutional Research & Assessment conducts brief graduate surveys each year and collects and publishes the results each spring. Departments and units receive data related to their program completers and may use the information to modify curriculum or instructional strategies. They may also send free-standing graduate surveys related to specific program goals.

### Standardized Field-specific Tests

Many students take national standardized tests in their field of specialization either during or after graduation. Student score summaries provide insight into strengths in curriculum delivery as well as gap areas for future attention.

### Standardized Survey Instruments

In some cases, departments and units can ask for a breakdown of institution-wide survey data to include only their own majors. The larger goals of the survey can then be assessed relative to the individual major programs.

### Syllabus Analysis

All departments routinely analyze course syllabi—written or oral assignments, readings, class discussions/projects, and Student Learning Outcomes—to determine if courses are meeting the goals related to their place in the General Education program and/or the major/minor.

## **Appendix B: Assessment Committee Work**

The Assessment Committee is a standing faculty committee within the College's governance structure; its membership and terms are established by the faculty bylaws.<sup>8</sup> The Faculty Development Committee conducts elections for this and other committees in April and, following elections, the outgoing and incoming members agree upon a time to meet together to ensure a smooth transfer from one committee to the next. Remaining and incoming members also select a chair for the upcoming academic year.

In the General Education Program, the Assessment Committee is responsible both for approving and reviewing student artifacts submitted by instructors and for verifying each artifact's alignment with the relevant goal for student learning. The committee also reviews selected student artifacts each semester and presents data about student learning at faculty workshops. The committee reviews and evaluates all student assessment data and all artifacts in a three-semester cycle.

The Assessment Committee monitors but does not (unless requested) directly participate in the assessment of student learning at the department or unit level. The committee tracks deadlines and summarizes efforts and accomplishments in this area for the faculty at large.

Finally, the Assessment Committee assists other groups and offices in the analysis of various instruments used for indirect assessment at all levels of learning and identifies the ways in which each of these instruments supports the assessment system of the College. Indirect forms of assessment—discussed in greater detail in Section IV—include the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Graduate Surveys, and the Individual Development and Educational Assessment (IDEA) Student Ratings System.

---

<sup>8</sup> In late fall of 2009, just after a Comprehensive Visit from the Higher Learning Commission, the faculty established a more formal structure for assessment within the faculty governance process; the newly restructured Assessment Committee began meeting in February of 2010 with the goal of enhancing faculty participation and encouraging faculty ownership of the assessment process.



# Appendix C: AAHE Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning

American Association of Higher Education: December 1992<sup>9</sup>

**1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.** Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Its effective practice, then, begins with and enacts a vision of the kinds of learning we most value for students and strive to help them achieve. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. Where questions about educational mission and values are skipped over, assessment threatens to be an exercise in measuring what's easy, rather than a process of improving what we really care about.

**2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.** Learning is a complex process. It entails not only what students know but what they can do with what they know; it involves not only knowledge and abilities but values, attitudes, and habits of mind that affect both academic success and performance beyond the classroom. Assessment should reflect these understandings by employing a diverse array of methods including those that call for actual performance, using them over time so as to reveal change, growth, and increasing degrees of integration. Such an approach aims for a more complete and accurate picture of learning, and therefore firmer bases for improving our students' educational experience.

**3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.** Assessment is a goal-oriented process. It entails comparing educational performance with educational purposes and expectations—these derived from the institution's mission, from faculty intentions in program and course design, and from knowledge of students' own goals. Where program purposes lack specificity or agreement, assessment as a process pushes a campus toward clarity about where to aim and what standards to apply; assessment also prompts attention to where and how program goals will be taught and learned. Clear, shared, implementable goals are the cornerstone for assessment that is focused and useful.

**4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.** Information about outcomes is of high importance; where students "end up" matters greatly. But to improve outcomes, we need to know about student experience along the way—about the curricula, teaching, and kind of student effort that lead to particular outcomes. Assessment can help understand which students learn best under what conditions; with such knowledge comes the capacity to improve the whole of their learning.

**5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic. Assessment is a process whose power is cumulative.** Though isolated, "one-shot" assessment can be better than none, improvement is best fostered when assessment entails a linked series of activities undertaken over time. This may mean tracking the progress of individual students, or of cohorts of students; it may mean collecting the same examples of student performance or using the same instrument semester after semester. The point is to monitor progress toward intended goals in a spirit of continuous improvement. Along the way, the assessment process itself should be evaluated and refined in light of emerging insights.

**6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.** Student learning is a campus-wide responsibility, and

---

<sup>9</sup> Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning (AAHE, 1992). Retrieved from: <http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/PrinciplesofAssessment.html>.



assessment is a way of enacting that responsibility. Thus, while assessment efforts may start small, the aim over time is to involve people from across the educational community. Faculty play an especially important role, but assessment's questions can't be fully addressed without participation by student-affairs educators, librarians, administrators, and students. Assessment may also involve individuals from beyond the campus (alumni/ae, trustees, employers) whose experience can enrich the sense of appropriate aims and standards for learning. Thus, understood, assessment is not a task for small groups of experts but a collaborative activity; its aim is wider, better-informed attention to student learning by all parties with a stake in its improvement.

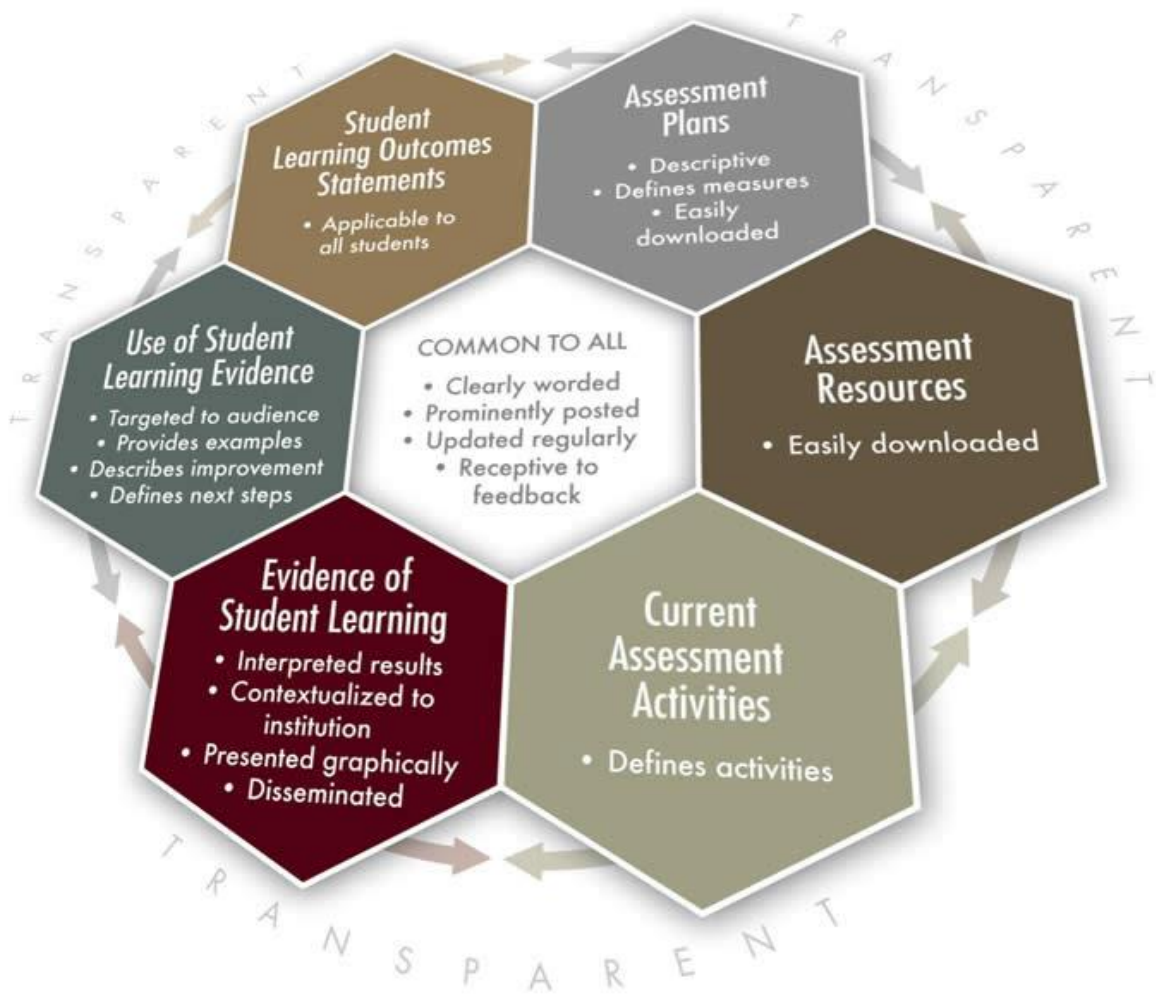
**7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.** Assessment recognizes the value of information in the process of improvement. But to be useful, information must be connected to issues or questions that people really care about. This implies assessment approaches that produce evidence that relevant parties will find credible, suggestive, and applicable to decisions that need to be made. It means thinking in advance about how the information will be used, and by whom. The point of assessment is not to gather data and return "results"; it is a process that starts with the questions of decision-makers, that involves them in the gathering and interpreting of data, and that informs and helps guide continuous improvement.

**8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.** Assessment alone changes little. Its greatest contribution comes on campuses where the quality of teaching and learning is visibly valued and worked at. On such campuses, the push to improve educational performance is a visible and primary goal of leadership; improving the quality of undergraduate education is central to the institution's planning, budgeting, and personnel decisions. On such campuses, information about learning outcomes is seen as an integral part of decision making, and avidly sought.

**9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.** There is compelling public stake in education. As educators, we have a responsibility to the publics that support or depend on us to provide information about the ways in which our students meet goals and expectations. But that responsibility goes beyond the reporting of such information; our deeper obligation-to ourselves, our students, and society-is to improve. Those to whom educators are accountable have a corresponding obligation to support such attempts at improvement.

## Appendix D: NILOA Transparency Framework

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, 2011<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Transparency Framework. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/TransparencyFramework.htm>.



# Glossary

**Benedictine College Assessment System (BCAS):** A set of policies and procedures used to document student learning so that the Benedictine College faculty can have access to data that support curriculum development at the institutional, program and course level. First approved in Spring 2011; updates published each summer.

**The Core:** “The Core courses are classes that all students take. They are courses designed both to lay the foundation for a successful academic career and to clearly and explicitly communicate the mission of the College [...]” (*Catalog*, p. 55).

**Core course:** A specific General Education Program course, such as Introduction to Theology, that is included in the Core. (See: The Core)

**curriculum area:** One of 13 clusters of courses in the General Education Program. Each curriculum area has its own Glossary Definition that characterizes what is required for a course to be included, as well as particular requirements for the successful completion of this component. Six curriculum areas are Foundations (Aesthetic Experience, Faith, Historical Perspectives, Person and Community in the Contemporary World, Philosophical Inquiry, Understanding the Natural World), and seven are Skills & Perspectives (Global Perspective, Oral Communication, Quantitative Analysis, Scientific Method, Visual Communication, Western Perspective, Written Communication). Courses for each curriculum area are listed in the current *Catalog* on pages 55-58.

**curriculum map:** An explicit outline of the connection from mission statement to broad program goals to courses to Student Learning Goals.

**Department/Unit-level Assessment and Reporting Cycle (DUAR):** The calendar departments and unit follow as they prepare their 5-Year Plan (5YP), Department/Unit-level Assessment Plan (DUAP), and Program-level Assessment Reports (PLARs).

**Department/Unit-level Assessment Plan (DUAP):** A published document that shows how the assessment of student learning is conducted in all programs housed by a particular department or unit. Updated and maintained by the department/unit and updated as needed and reviewed by the Assessment Committee. In general, all DUAPs include a unit mission statement, a set of program goals, and a set of Student Learning Goals for each program goal. The Student Learning Goals are then mapped to particular assessment strategies (some direct, some indirect), including frequency of use for each strategy, person responsible for administering and collecting, a description of acceptable performance, and the target success rate. The department or unit executes the plan and gives the Assessment Committee an annual update (normally in the spring) of its progress on one of the SLGs. The update includes the actual success rate and the curricular changes (if any) implemented as a result of what has been learned from the data.

**Foundations:** “The Foundations are where Benedictine College most explicitly focuses on transmitting the specific purpose of the general education program: to refine students’ capacity to pursue and acquire truth; to help them to appreciate the great achievements of thought and culture; and to develop their capacity to understand the principles of sound practical and theoretical judgment. The College does not require courses to be from specific departments (for example, history), but rather looks at the subject of the course (for example, art history or economic history also provide students with an “historical perspective” and thus fulfill the foundation). Benedictine College believes that it is essential that students are exposed to a wide variety of perspectives, thus even though a course may be listed in two different Foundations, each course can only be applied to one Foundation [...]” (*Catalog*, p. 55).

**General Education Program:** A combination of courses and related activities that, when completed alongside a major program, lead to an undergraduate degree.

32

**General Education Program Assessment Plan:** A portion of the Benedictine College Assessment System that addresses the assessment of student learning in the General Education Program. Contained on pages 5-14 of this publication.

**Glossary Definition:** A set of agreed-upon standards for courses that fit into one of the six Foundations or seven Skills & Perspectives curriculum areas. Each of the 13 curriculum areas has its own Glossary Definition. Original set approved by faculty in 2002; subsequent revisions approved by faculty vote.

**major program:** A combination of courses and related activities organized for the attainment of a completion of a transcribed degree credential. The assessment of student performance on major program outcomes is part of the BCAS. The current *Catalog* lists 46 undergraduate majors (p. 43-44).

**minor program:** A combination of courses and related activities organized for the attainment of a completion of a transcribed credential less comprehensive than but alongside a major. The current *Catalog* lists 32 undergraduate minors (p. 44).

**Program:** For purposes of assessment, a program is a collection of courses and other requirements that, when successfully completed, lead on their own or in combination with another program or programs to some kind of certification or credential. For purposes of assessment, programs include the General Education Program, major programs, minor programs, certification programs, specialization programs, and other stand-alone programs.

**Program Goal:** Broad target knowledge and skills sets for any academic program. Each department or unit sets and measures student success on Program Goals for the programs it houses.

**Program-level Assessment Report (PLAR):** A report sent to the Assessment Committee by an academic unit (usually during Year 4 of the Department/Unit-level Assessment and Reporting Cycle (DUAR)).

**rubric:** A framework (either informal or formal) that both outlines the required elements of an assignment and describes the criteria for success on each element.

**Skills and Perspectives:** “The Skills and Perspectives courses are designed to ensure that the students are exposed to a variety of perspectives and learn the essential skills they will need for a successful life after college. Because the College believes that these things can be accomplished in a variety of ways and in almost any discipline, the intention is that they can be met through the general education program or the major, without any additional required hours. Students can be credited with up to three Skills and Perspectives (and one Foundation) in one course [...]” (*Catalog*, p. 57).

**Student Learning Goal (SLG):** A statement desired knowledge or skill unit, usually delivered within a course. Instructors publish both course-specific and, when relevant, program-related SLGs for every course they teach.

**Thematic Learning Goal:** Broad target knowledge and skills sets for the General Education Program. The 15 Thematic Learning Goals derive from the three themes in the liberal arts pillar section of the Benedictine College mission statement.