



General Education

Department Website: <http://www.american.edu/provost/gened/>

1. Learning Outcomes

The General Education Program as a whole has six overall learning outcomes. Students completing the Program will developed the following critical intellectual capacities:

1. written and oral communication
2. critical thinking, including information literacy
3. ethical awareness
4. aesthetic sensibility
5. diverse perspectives, including race, class, culture, gender, and academic discipline
6. a global point of view

In addition, each of the five Curricular Areas in the Program has three area-specific goals. The five Curricular Areas, and their goals, are:

Area One: The Creative Arts

1. examine the nature of creativity, especially imaginative and intuitive thinking
2. situate creative works, and judgments about those creative works, in their appropriate social and historical context
3. develop the student's own creative and expressive abilities, so that the student can better understand the qualities that shape an artist's work

Area Two: Traditions that Shape the Western World

1. explore the diverse historical and philosophical traditions that have shaped the contemporary Western world
2. read and discuss fundamental texts from those traditions, situating the texts in their appropriate intellectual contexts

3. develop the student's ability to critically and comparatively reflect on religious and philosophical issues, in dialogue with others both past and present

Area Three: Global and Multicultural Perspectives

1. explore those habits of thought and feeling that distinguish regions, countries, and cultures from one another
2. discuss, in comparative and cross-cultural perspective, the concepts, patterns, and trends that characterize contemporary global politics
3. develop the student's capacity to critically analyze major issues in international and intercultural relations, especially how categories of difference are organized within and across cultures and how they affect political systems

Area Four: Social Institutions and Behavior

1. study the institutions, systems, and patterns of governance and of economic and social organization that underlie contemporary societies
2. place policy options and their consequences in their appropriate social and political context, drawing on classic and contemporary theories of human organization
3. develop the student's capacity to critically reflect on the organization of societies and the relationship between the individual and the society, using the distinctive methods of inquiry appropriate to the study of social institutions

Area Five: The Natural Sciences

1. investigate the natural world and the living forms that inhabit it by studying the systems and processes that occur at scales from the atomic to the cosmic
2. develop problem-solving skills and utilize the scientific method to describe, explain, and predict natural phenomena through laboratory experiences
3. analyze the role of science in public discourse and in addressing societal problems

2. Assessment Plan

Measures	Target	Learning Outcomes	Cycle and Reviewers
Direct measure: Analysis of a sample of student work	Program and Area outcomes are, on average, “adequately” met. (Faculty readers assign an average score of 3 on a scale of 0 to 4.)	Each year’s implementation will address all of the Curricular Area learning outcomes and two of the Program learning outcomes (see Appendix A for planned cycle)	A faculty team, led by the General Education Assessment Coordinator (a faculty-member who receives an annual course release), considers student work. The team, with the assistance of instructors who submit student work, adapts AAC&U VALUE Rubrics* for Program Goals. Rubrics for Area Goals are written by using departmental learning outcomes as a guide. The team’s report is presented by the Assessment Coordinator to the General Education Committee by September 15 for their consideration and action.
Indirect measure: “Developing Student Abilities” items of the Graduation Census	80% of students report that the AU experience developed outcome-related abilities “Well” or “Very Well”.	All six Program learning outcomes (see Appendix B for detail on how survey items relate to learning outcomes)	The Office of Institutional Research will tabulate responses to this section of the Graduation Census and forward to Assessment Coordinator by August 1. Assessment Coordinator will report the results to the Committee by September 15.
Indirect measure: Items about the General Education Program on the Campus Climate Survey	75% of students “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” that they understand the goals	Current items address learning outcomes 1 and 2, as well as overall understanding of the program (see Appendix	The Office of Institutional Research will tabulate responses to this Campus Climate Survey and forward to Assessment

	of the General Education Program. 80% of students “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” that the Program is helpful meeting specific goals	C for detail on survey items)	Coordinator by August 1. Assessment Coordinator will report the results to the Committee by September 15.
Indirect measure: General Education questions on SETs	80% of students in General Education courses rate the overall quality of the course as 5 or higher on the 7-point scale. 60% of students “Agree” that the course met specific learning outcomes; that is, they rate General Education Items with 5 or higher on the 7-point scale.	Current items address Program learning outcomes 1, 3, 4, and 5 and a subset of Area learning outcomes (see Appendix D for detail on current survey items)	SETs are filled out each semester and are available through Eagedata. The Assessment Coordinator will summarize data by academic year and report to the General Education Committee by September 15.
Indirect measure: alumni surveys	75% of alumni 3-5 years after graduation say that General Education courses helped to prepare them for their post-college experiences related to the Program learning outcomes	All six Program goals	Occasionally. An alumni survey is planned for AY 2009-10 as part of the overall review of the General Education Program. The Office of Institutional Research will conduct the survey with the advice of the General Education Committee. OIR will report results to the Committee.

* For information on VALUE Rubrics see www.aanu.org/value.