

Step 2: “Operationalizing” Measurable Proficiencies

As you may have noticed, many of the Measurable Proficiency statements are still too broad and/or vague to assess profitably. Before you can evaluate your students’ mastery in these areas, you may need to “operationalize” these proficiency statements by identifying the specific knowledge and skills taught in the course you have selected.

For example, Outcome 1 states, in part, that students will “understand the roles of social institutions.” Obviously, this statement raises the question, “which institutions”? Clearly, every course will not address every social institution.

Other proficiency statements may be defined in very different ways depending on the courses in which they are assessed. For instance, Outcome 2 states that students will “possess an international viewpoint that will allow them to examine critically the culture of their own nation.”

In a sociology course, this statement might be assessed by asking students to critique marriage customs or kinship patterns in the United States by contrasting them with equivalent customs and patterns in another culture. In a political science course, assessment might ask students to critique the mechanisms for social change in this country by viewing them through the values and practices of another culture.

At this point, you need to examine each of the Measurable Proficiencies you have selected.

- 1. Identify any terms that need further definition or specification before they can be assessed.** Terms such as “social institutions,” “another culture,” “operational principles,” “diverse issues,” and the like must be defined.
- 2. Specify what these terms mean in the context of your course.** Which particular social institutions are discussed in your course? What other culture or cultures does your course address? Which “issues” and “principles” does your course cover? Obviously, you must answer these questions before you can assess how well your students are meeting these goals.

After you have completed this analysis, complete section D of the General Education Assessment: Pilot Project Worksheet.