

### Step 3: Selecting an Appropriate Assessment Activity

The next step is to identify or develop assessment activities that measure how well students have mastered the measurable proficiencies you have targeted. These activities should yield data that supports the broader purpose of assessment, which is to periodically monitor what we are doing, to identify areas that can be improved, and to make constructive changes.

Since General Education Assessment will be ongoing process, the assessments you select should be unobtrusive, simple to implement, and easy to assess. This crucial step involves the following activities:

- 1. Consider the long-term logistical issues involved.** Since General Education assessment will be on-going, assessment activities should yield information that is
  - easy to store (if the activities need to be kept on file ),
  - easy to retrieve (if that's necessary),
  - easy to assess (by the instructor as well as by a separate departmental assessment committee).
- 2. Consider factors that will affect the type and amount of information you need to collect and the best instruments for doing so.** What is the average class size for you courses? What kind of assignments do these courses typically use? The assessments you select should meet the following criteria:
  - They are sustainable. (That is, they do not require heroic expenditures of students' or professors' time either to take or to assess.) Effective activities are ones that will you're your department enough information to make constructive changes while requiring the least amount of time and effort. In large sections, that might mean giving a machine-graded test to assess a key outcome. Primary trait analysis or other forms of close, qualitative assessment of individual work samples demand time, energy, and attention and should be used strategically.
  - They are unobtrusive. (They fit naturally into the course and do not interrupt the normal flow of activities. Ideally, they are part of the current schedule of course assignments);
  - They are typical. (If faculty members who teach the course are not already using the activity, then they can easily incorporate it into their syllabus).
- 3. Review assessment plans on other campuses.** Many colleges and universities have already developed a variety of assessment mechanisms that you may be able to adapt. Some materials are available at the GEC website at <http://www.valdosta.edu/gec/HelpfulAssessmentLinks.shtml>. Materials are also available in West Hall 120.

- 4. *Select an appropriate format.*** The proficiency you target will help determine format you use. Certain kinds of knowledge and some very discrete skills lend themselves to objective questions. On the other hand, mastery of other skills, understanding of general principles and concepts, and evidence of the ability to apply certain ethical principles or aesthetic judgments may require written or spoken demonstrations. Consider the following format options.

### **Exam questions**

These could include specifically targeted word problems or equations to be solved as part of an algebra test. On the other hand, they might include strategically worded short answer questions or paragraph-length discussion questions on a semester exam.

### **In-class activities**

Examples could include exercises designed to assess students' ability to apply crucial concepts or skills that reflect General Education proficiencies, such as the ability to interpret data presented in statistical format or the ability to apply a set of ethical criteria to a real-world example. Central Michigan University's Faculty Center for Innovative Teaching offers several useful examples of these kinds of activities [[link to "Classroom Assessment Techniques"](#)].

### **Out of class assignments**

Appropriate activities might include the following:

- a formal class presentation,
- a research exercise,
- a short response or reaction paper,
- a documented research paper, or
- any other regularly scheduled activity designed to assess students' ability to synthesize knowledge or demonstrate mastery of essential skills.

You will find examples illustrating all of these approaches in the password protected area of the General Education Council's homepage.

After you have weighed your options and have determined the most appropriate assessment activity to evaluate the knowledge and skills you have targeted, complete section E of the General Education Assessment: Pilot Project Worksheet.