**Why combine assessment of the general education capstone with program assessment?**

In the past, program assessment and the assessment of the general education capstone have been submitted on different schedules and reviewed separately by the Assessment Committee (UAC) and the General Education Committee (GEC). This was the case even though the general education capstone is usually also the capstone of the major. This had the unintended consequences of increasing the burden of assessment. In this next cycle of assessment of the GE capstone, programs that wish to combine the reporting of assessment results to meet both purposes are encouraged to do so.

**How are general education capstone and program learning outcomes related in the new process of integrated capstone assessment?**

Capstone courses generally involve a culminating experience such as a research paper or project, an internship or field experience, a visual arts project, a creative performance, etc. Regardless of the format of the course, it is likely that students will be demonstrating their mastery of curricular material in ways that jointly show understanding of program (i.e. major-specific) and general education capstone learning outcomes. Capstone level students are assessed on their growth and achievement through their entire experience in the major and in their department. In interpreting how student achievement in capstone courses reflects what students have learned in their general education experiences, what is being sought is an understanding of how students’ capacities to succeed in their major are also reflective of their liberal arts education at Oakland. Examples might be commenting on how student work reflects their understanding of sociocultural or historical context, of cultural diversity, or of psychological issues.

The integrated review assessing and reporting data/findings will therefore be able to reflect student mastery of general education capstone learning outcomes within major-specific culminating experiences, through demonstration of:

* appropriate uses of a variety of methods of inquiry and, where applicable, a recognition of the ethical considerations that may arise out of the inquiry

AND

* the ability to integrate the knowledge learned in general education and its relevance to the student’s life and career

This assessment includes at least three of the general education knowledge areas (formal reasoning, writing, arts, foreign language/culture, global perspective, literature, natural science and technology, social science, western civilization) and/or cross-cutting capacities (effective communication, critical thinking, social awareness, information literacy).

The integrated assessment plan and report specify which knowledge areas and/or capacities are being assessed in the capstone course. The findings are discussed in a context that reflects student mastery of the program goals, as integrated with cross-cutting capacities and/or knowledge areas. For example if the capstone course requires a research paper, the criteria for evaluating the paper (the rubric) could address any three elements from critical thinking, communication, social awareness, information literacy and/or the appropriate knowledge area, within the assessment of learning outcomes identified by the major. If the capstone involves an internship or field experience, the same type of evaluation would apply.

The general education proposal provides the following examples of how to meet the cross-cutting capacities (pgs. 11-12), in ways that are generally consistent with meeting program goals:

**Effective communication** – ability to communicate effectively in verbal and written form. Skills include the following abilities:

* To deliver effective oral presentations
* To write effective arguments and analyses

**Critical thinking** – ability to apply careful, rational analysis to form judgments. Skills include the following abilities:

* To gather and assess relevant information using abstractions to interpret it correctly
* To reach well-reasoned conclusions and solutions and test them against relevant criteria
* To recognize and assess the assumptions, implications, and consequences of alternative systems of thought
* To work with others to figure out solutions to complex problems

**Social awareness** – ability to understand one’s society and one’s place within that society. Skills include the following abilities:

* To understand issues of social importance
* To examine the ways in which these issues are handled within our society
* To act as effective citizens

**Information literacy** – ability to find and use information effectively. Skills include the following abilities.

* To acquire information from a variety of sources and delivery mechanisms
* To evaluate the quality of information sources
* To use information effectively