

History and Evaluation of the Assessment of General Education

KU's Comprehensive Assessment Plan

KU's Comprehensive Assessment Plan is the product of the University Assessment Committee, which was established by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in the Spring of 1988. The committee's charge was: 1) to develop a comprehensive plan that takes into account both external and internal assessment goals; 2) to monitor the implementation of that plan; and 3) to continue to advise the Vice Chancellor on a wide variety of related issues.

In addition to providing empirical evidence of the extent to which students are achieving a common set of educational goals as part of their university experience, the comprehensive plan of assessment meets the following three broad goals:

Accountability – The University is accountable to the citizens of the State of Kansas for the use of public funds. Assessment provides one important tool for demonstrating that those funds are being used wisely.

Program Improvement – Strengthening and improving the undergraduate experience should be an ongoing process in higher education. Assessment provides some of the information needed to perform this task.

Communication – Communicating the university's goals and philosophy to the public is important. The assessment process can provide a two-way flow of information that will enhance the relationship between the university and its constituencies.

KU's Comprehensive Assessment Plan is comprised of three ongoing institutional activities:

- **General Education Assessment:** Involves individual, structured interviews with seniors by teams of faculty to ascertain their level of attainment on each of the six Goals of General Education.
- **Assessment in the Major:** Provides a summary of internal and external assessment activities, and the delineation any resulting program or curricular changes, for each major program, within the professional schools and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.
- **Goal Attainment Survey:** Surveys various University constituencies on the importance of 35 institutional goals, and KU's success in meeting those goals.

Basic Skills Assessment: In the 1988 plan, basic skills assessment was a component in which enrollment and performance in basic math and English were assessed. That process led to the College's continuous enrollment requirement, which specifies immediate and continuous enrollment in math and English until minimum course requirements are met.

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Determining Goal Attainment

The responsibility for determining the goals and objectives of general education and the means of achieving those goals is spread among the various professional schools and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Each professional school and the College require some course work in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. However, each professional school and the College has its own general education requirements for graduation that specify how general education credits are to be distributed among these areas, and in some cases specify actual courses to be taken.

To achieve a common set of general education goals, the University Assessment Committee polled the College and individual schools during the Fall of 1989 to compile a comprehensive list. From this input the committee developed a set of goals for the purpose of general education assessment recognizing that the emphasis of particular goals may vary by academic unit. The original Goals of General Education were revised in 2000, as part of a formal evaluation of the process.