General Education Assessment Report:

A Bottom-up Approach

Academic Year 2024-2025

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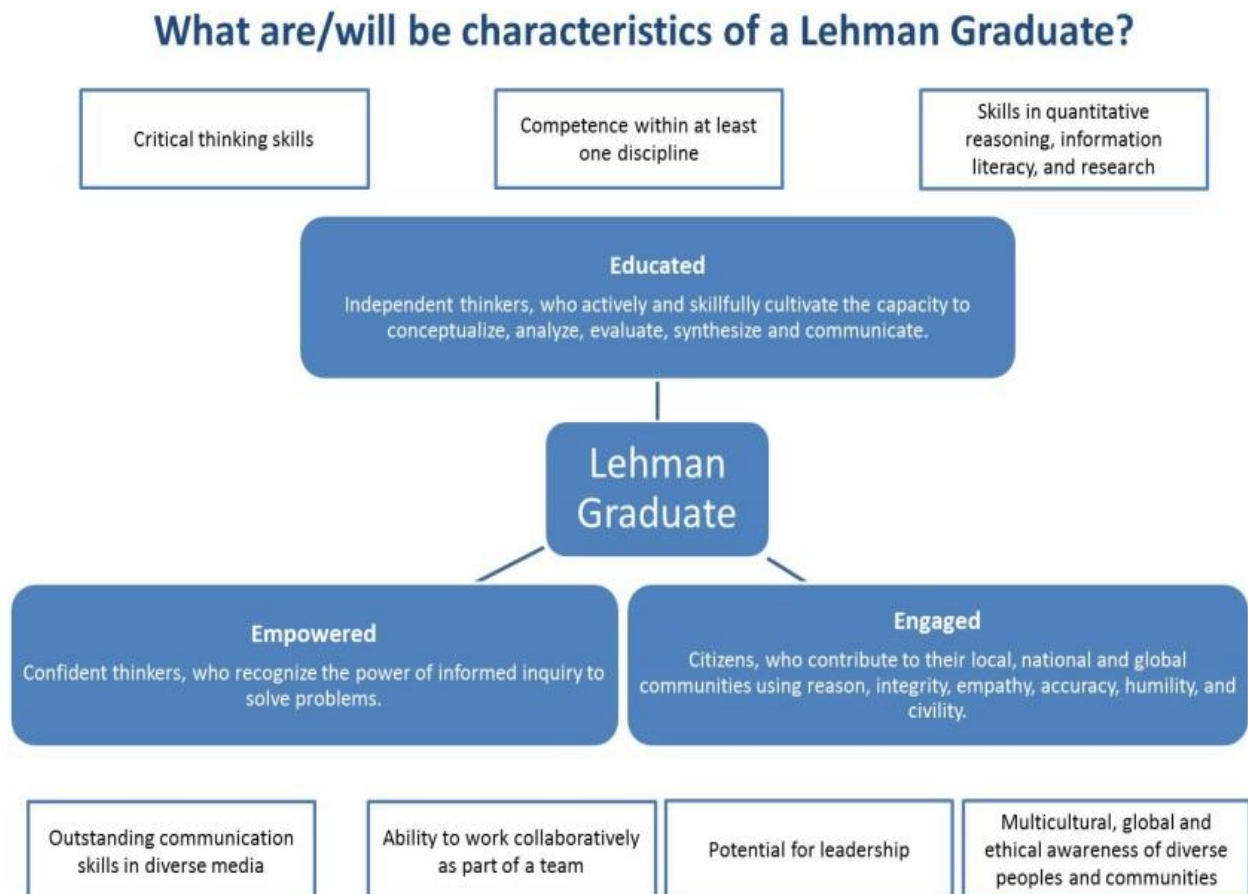
LEHMAN COLLEGE | CUNY

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Lehman College of the City University of New York (CUNY) has centered its mission and institutional learning objectives (ILOs) around the notion that its graduates are *Educated, Engaged,* and *Empowered*. As the only four-year CUNY campus in the Bronx, Lehman is dedicated to a liberal arts education and works to ensure that the student experience aligns with these objectives.

What are/will be characteristics of a Lehman Graduate?

Critical thinking skills

Competence within at least one discipline

Skills in quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and research

Educated
Independent thinkers, who actively and skillfully cultivate the capacity to conceptualize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize and communicate.

Lehman Graduate

Empowered
Confident thinkers, who recognize the power of informed inquiry to solve problems.

Engaged
Citizens, who contribute to their local, national and global communities using reason, integrity, empathy, accuracy, humility, and civility.

Outstanding communication skills in diverse media

Ability to work collaboratively as part of a team

Potential for leadership

Multicultural, global and ethical awareness of diverse peoples and communities

To accomplish this, degree-granting programs typically design their own learning goals with the expectations of their discipline/profession and, whenever possible, with Lehman's mission in mind. However, these academic programs also *offer courses that are part of the entire CUNY system's* Pathways *designated courses*. These are "buckets" or "clusters" of courses that students choose from, and they ensure that: (1) the transfer experience within CUNY is seamless and (2) students get exposed to a diverse range of academic subjects, tools and approaches.
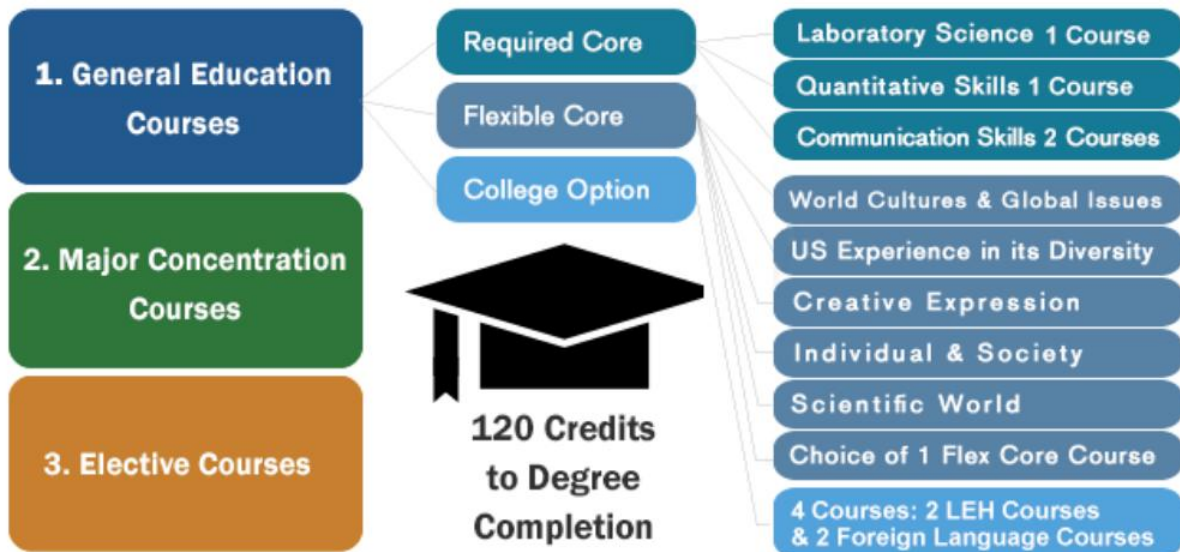
These clusters guarantee that students take at least one course from each of these topics: creative expressions, world cultures, US and its diversity, and individuals and diversity. While some departments assess some of these courses as part of their own course-level or program-level assessment efforts, Lehman College also strives to assess the student experience in these courses as they relate to the ILOs. During the 2024-2025 Academic Year (AY24-25), Lehman College assessed Information Literacy and Communication Skills, in accordance with the Gen Ed assessment timeline developed in 2020 by the Provost's office.

Domain	ILO	AY 2020-21	AY 2021-22	AY 2022-23	AY 2023-24	AY 2024-25
Educated	Critical thinking	X			X	
Educated	Competence in at least one discipline	Program assessment	Program assessment	Program assessment	Program assessment	Program assessment
Educated	Information Literacy, Quantitative Reasoning, Research		X			X
Empowered	Communication Skills		X			X
Empowered	Ability to work in teams			X		
Engaged	Leadership			X		
Engaged	Multicultural, global, and ethical awareness	X			X	

APPROACH AND JUSTIFICATION

The Provost and Institutional Effectiveness appointed and tasked an Academic Assessment Liaison/Fellow (Devrim Yavuz, Sociology) to spearhead Gen Ed assessment. In consultation with the Senate Standing Committee on Assessment and based on past dialogue with the campus community, it was decided that the assessment of general education should be carried out with a bottom-up approach, rather than with instruments imposed top-down. Concretely, Deans, program Chairs and their Assessment Coordinators were contacted directly and were encouraged to share assignments used in their required and flexible core courses, along with data on how students did in them (see Appendix 1 for the "FAQ" document that was sent out to the campus community).

RATIONALE

A bottom-up approach fits the organizational culture and structure well. Lehman College has a long-standing commitment to academic freedom and to shared governance. Moreover, programs and their Assessment Coordinators (see personnel section at the end of document) are typically tasked with gauging the effectiveness of their own course sequences and not the College's ILO's learning goals. Indeed, past dialogue about gen ed assessment has revealed that centrally administered assessment instruments do not mesh with this culture and established practice. In sum, the Gen Ed courses and skills the College wants to assess might not align with programs' own assessment goals and needs. Thus, using data already generated through regular class activity was preferred for these additional advantages it offered:

✓ Collecting embedded activities respects part- and full-time faculty's time while also helping to highlight their valuable contributions to general education by showcasing their work. This is particularly useful in places such as Lehman College where faculty are already significantly serving the institution. As importantly, the assessment of Gen Ed becomes more reliable thanks to the fact that data from more courses taught by a greater diversity of instructors can be assessed without burdening part-time faculty.

✓ The literature on teaching and learning increasingly advocates for the use of discipline-specific assignments to develop and gauge the instruction of general skills. Additionally, it has been highlighted that gaps in college-preparedness can best be closed by focusing on discipline-specific skills. Indeed, by providing all students with context and explicit tasks, discipline-specific courses can more tangibly help define what we mean by information literacy or communication skills (e.g. Brasley, 2008; Farrell & Badke, 2015; Tuominen et al., 2005). This is important at Lehman College also. For instance, as will be discussed below, while the Department of Sociology finds that information literacy includes annotated bibliographies alloy for mapping the discipline and different theoretical perspectives, in some courses the Department of Philosophy might favor students honing their analytical skills by learning how to engage with the ideas of one foundational reading.

✓ Because only existing information was collected (rather than being generated through a top-down effort), the assessment of gen ed can give various programs and Lehman College a sense of whether more should be done to incorporate gen ed skills. Hopefully, this can generate conversations internal to the programs and throughout the campus on what kinds of skills we want to actively incorporate in classes.
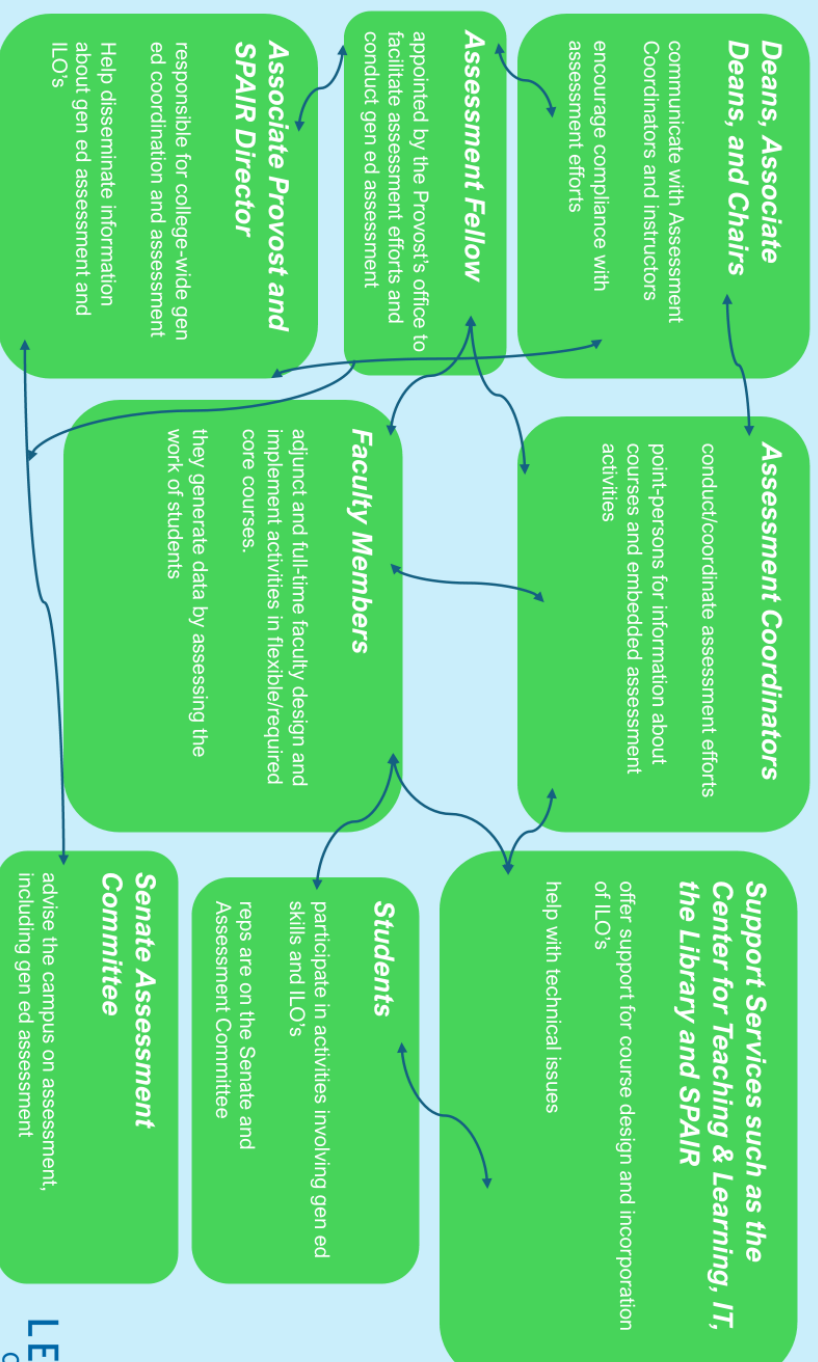
✓ Finally, given that the value of higher education and specific disciplines is often put into question by various political and economic actors around the world, it is important to showcase how discipline-specific activities cover skills we associate with general education.

PERSONNEL

Many individuals are involved in promoting assessment activities and general education assessment on campus (see diagram on next page). For this specific AY24-25 bottom-up approach to assessment, program-level **Assessment Coordinators** that typically conduct assessment for their disciplines provided information about activities in gen ed courses and either evaluated some sections themselves or were the point persons for obtaining information from instructors. **Faculty members** designed activities for gen ed courses and provided data obtained about the **Student** experience to Assessment Coordinators.

The bottom-up approach to gen ed evaluation during AY24-25 was designed and implemented by the **Assessment Fellow/Liaison** (appointed by the Provost's office on a per-need basis) who organized the collection of information, communicated the goal of this pilot program and facilitated the work of faculty and coordinators. He was advised by the **Senate Committee on Assessment** as well as the **Associate Provost responsible for general education** and the **SPAIR office (Strategic Planning, Assessment & Institutional Research)**, who also provided valuable feedback and help communicating with the campus community. They also train coordinators and the campus community on skills relating to assessment. **Chairs, Deans and Associate Deans** provided support by reaching out to coordinators. Finally, the campus community benefits from the presence of support services such as the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Library that help enhance the incorporation of gen ed ILO's into courses and programs.

Working together to assess general education

Deans, Associate Deans, and Chairs

communicate with Assessment Coordinators and instructors

encourage compliance with assessment efforts

Assessment Fellow

appointed by the Provost's office to facilitate assessment efforts and conduct gen ed assessment

Associate Provost and SPAIR Director

responsible for college-wide gen ed coordination and assessment

Help disseminate information about gen ed assessment and ILO's

Assessment Coordinators

conduct/coordinate assessment efforts

point-persons for information about courses and embedded assessment activities

Faculty Members

adjunct and full-time faculty design and implement activities in flexible/required core courses.

they generate data by assessing the work of students

Support Services such as the Center for Teaching & Learning, IT, the Library and SPAIR

offer support for course design and incorporation of ILO's

help with technical issues

Students

participate in activities involving gen ed skills and ILO's

reps are on the Senate and Assessment Committee

Senate Assessment Committee

advise the campus on assessment, including gen ed assessment

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The approach to AY24-25 gen ed assessment was a pilot project and therefore its steps are subject to change and improvement.

(1) ***December 2024*** An initial email was sent to Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs and Assessment Coordinators to inform them that the Assessment Coordinator was going to collect information about flexible and required core courses with the goal of designing a bottom-up approach to gen ed assessment. The email was followed by an **FAQ document** based on the feedback from coordinators (see appendix I for the document)

(2) ***February 2025*** a form was sent out to Assessment Coordinators and Chairs to obtain information about flexible and general core courses. Specifically, the form was an opportunity to mention whether information literacy and communication skills were covered in the courses that programs were responsible for, along with providing information about the activities and whether a readily available rubric existed.

(3) ***March 2025 - May 2025*** the Assessment Fellow worked with Assessment Coordinators, some Chairs and faculty who had questions about the assessment.

(4) ***May 2025 – June 2025*** some programs provided rubric scores and description of assignments as well as, in some cases, reflections about what the gen ed skills meant for their disciplines. The Assessment Fellow then compiled the information to compile the report.

OVERALL RESULTS AT A GLANCE[1]

- ✓ **7 departments** provided information about **25** courses and **35** sections total

- ✓ **Of** these 35 sections, **29** reported at least one activity/assignment relating to Information Literacy and **32** to Communication skills

- ✓ **Activities for information literacy** included library searches, critically engaging primary sources, reading maps, and accessing data

- ✓ **Communication** skills were fostered through a variety of exercises including applying course concepts to real life problems, personal narratives, and experimenting with various disciplinary genres

- ✓ **6 departments** provided assessment data about **10** courses and **11** total sections

- ✓ **16 assignments** and the work of **190** students was assessed for IL and **188** for Communication skills (209 students total). **300 artifacts** were thus assessed by instructors and assessment coordinators.

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[1] See appendix II for a full course survey results, appendix III for the survey questionnaire, and relevant sections for each program for detailed results

The data provided by six programs, assessment coordinators and instructors for 10 courses and 11 sections was added up in order to provide an overview of Information Literacy and Communication Skills in Flexible Core classes at Lehman College. In all, this has afforded the opportunity to gauge the experience of 209 students (assuming there were no overlaps) using 322 assignments for information literacy and 319 for communication skills.

CUMMULATIVE ASSESSMENT RESULTS: PERCENTAGE OF ASSIGNMENTS WHO MEET THE COMPETENCY REQUIREMENT				
Learning goal	Do not meet	Meet	Number of assignments evaluated	Number of students
Information literacy	21.43 (69)	78.57 (253)	322	190
Communication skills	14.10 (45)	85.9 (274)	319	187
Methodology: Departments used different scales to assess the activities. The level of competency was deemed met under the following conditions: obtaining 3 on a three-point scale; obtaining 3 or 4 on a four-point scale, obtaining 4 or 5 on a five-point scale; obtaining 3 to 5 on a five-point scale that has a zero. For detailed results see sections organized by department below				

Overall Lehman College students did very well with both skills, with nearly 86% meeting the program's criteria for success in communication and 78.57% in information literacy. This is not surprising given that communication skills have been fostered by such as the Writing Center, Writing Across the Curriculum, and the continued use of highly engaging assignments by the members of Lehman College faculty. As for information literacy, continued cooperation between the library and programs as well as faculty members who have fostered experiential learning and found interesting sources of information (especially during COVID-19 and distant learning) is having a positive impact. A more detailed analysis of assessment activity can further help point to areas where Lehman College, its faculty and its students do well.

The English Department provided information about four courses (ENG 222 *Literary Genres*; ENG 223 *English Literature*; ENG 228 *Literature and Medicine*; ENG 234 *Women in Literature*) and assessment data about one course. Unsurprisingly, written communication is a major part of the curriculum and activities that students do in these courses, with some requiring response papers about a reading or reflections about a contemporary issue or personal experience. Many use scaffolding assignments so that students improve their written communication skills throughout the semester.

The assignment used for assessment was from ENG 228 *Literature and Medicine* (taught by Sophia Hsu). The 3-4 pages analytical embodiment narrative gave the students the chance to *"reflect on what it feels like to live in [their] body."* To write the essay, students were provided a few helpful tips such as to "choose a few key events (around 3) from [their] life that […] are particularly noteworthy for explaining to someone what it feels like to live in [their] body" with several suggestions of questions the piece can help answer, such as "What have you realized about society, culture, the larger world, and/or yourself given the experiences you've had living in your body? What moments have helped you gain this realization?" The literature on teaching and learning has shown how embodiment exercises help students critically write and think by engaging them with an immediate aspect of their lives that has broader social implications. As such, enhancing communication skills in this way fits well with Lehman College's broader mission.

The embodiment essays of 19 students were evaluated using a detailed rubric (see opposite page for the rubric) that touched on several aspects of writing ranging on whether the student made an original statement (argument) to the logical flow of the narrative (organization) to aspects that touch on critical thinking and information literacy, such as the ability to choose and incorporate convincing evidence (evidence and analysis).

ENG 228 EMBODIMENT NARRATIVE: WRITTEN COMMUNICATION						
Skill/rubric score	1	2	3	4	5	N
Writing prep	5.26% (1)	5.26% (1)	10.53% (2)	15.8% (3)	63.16% (12)	
Intro	0	0	5.26% (1)	31.57% (6)	63.16% (12)	
Argument	0	0	0	31.58% (6)	68.42% (13)	
Evidence & analysis	0	0	0	57.89% (11)	42.10% (8)	19
Organization	0	5.26% (1)	5.26% (1)	26.32% (5)	63.16% (12)	
Conclusion	0	5.26% (1)	5.26% (1)	15.79% (3)	73.68 (14)	
Polish	0	0	5.26% (1)	31.58% (6)	63.16 (12)	

The assessment of the embodiment narrative revealed that close to 80% of students took advantage of scaffolding assignments to receive feedback (writing prep). Unsurprisingly, like for the other programs and courses, they thus did very well on portions of the assignment that involved writing such as the organization and conclusion of the narrative, with 79% and 89% of students obtaining rubric scores of 4 and 5, with nearly 95% of students taken the extra care to "polish" their narrative so that it is written clearly. All of the students knew how to convincingly argue based on evidence (evidence and analysis scores of 4 and 5). One conversation the College can have is how to get even more students score full marks on tasks involving evidence across all of its courses.

ENG 228: Embodiment Narrative Rubric (Developed by Sophia Hsu, English)

	Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
Minimum Requirements (5)	Meets page limit, fulfills assignment	Slightly under but fulfills assignment	Significantly under or partially fulfills assignment	Significantly under & does not fulfill assignment
Writing Prep (10)	Completes proposal, full rough draft, peer review, and writing conference	Completes 3 out of 4 writing prep steps	Completes 2 out of 4 writing prep steps	Completes 1 or 0 writing prep steps
*Introduction (5)	Begins with catchy, relevant opening; focuses quickly on central topic; provides necessary context	Begins with relevant opening but does not quickly or clearly identify or contextualize central topic	Attempts to provide relevant opening but it's too broad and the central topic is unclear	Demonstrates no attempt to focus on a topic
**Argument (10)	Makes a specific, compelling, & original argument; states this argument clearly in intro	Makes argument but needs to clarify focus & significance; argument appears in intro	Attempts to make argument but does not clearly state it in intro; argument becomes clearer later in essay	Demonstrates no attempt to make argument; may circle around some loosely connected ideas
**Evidence & Analysis (10)	Provides well-chosen evidence w/ vivid details to support main points; carefully interprets evidence to explain meaning; closely analyzes evidence to uncover assumptions, implications, & deeper significance	Provides some evidence, interpretation, & analysis but not all points are sufficiently supported; evidence may lack details/relevance; analysis is hard to follow at times or lacks depth/clarity	Provides some evidence to support main points but neither interprets nor analyzes evidence; tends to leave evidence to speak for itself or makes claims without supporting evidence; evidence/analysis appears unconnected to the argument	Lacks both evidence & analysis to back up main points; essay lacks cohesive ideas
*Organization (5)	Body paragraphs each focus on a specific step & progress logically & deliberately; point of each paragraph is clear early on; transitions are smooth & effectively guide reader from point to point	Body paragraphs each focus on a specific step, but point of each paragraph is not clear early on; there appears to be a structural logic but it isn't made explicit through transitions	Body paragraphs each focus on a specific step, but point of each body paragraph is unclear; many ideas at once or repeat ideas; structural logic is unclear at times	There is no attempt to organize essay into coherent body paragraphs; essay lacks transitions & any structural logic
Conclusion (5)	Briefly yet accurately summarizes argument & main points, gestures toward larger impacts by opening up argument to larger implications or further questions that logically extend from essay	Summarizes argument & main points; attempts to open up to larger impacts but in an awkward manner, perhaps by merely stating they exist or by overextending essay's significance	Attempts to summarize argument but with too much or too little detail or attempts to gesture toward larger impacts	There is no attempt to conclude the essay by either summarizing main points or gesturing toward larger impacts
Polish (5)	Writes lucidly & elegantly; avoids ambiguous language, typos, & grammatical errors	Writes clearly on the whole; makes occasional typos & grammatical errors	Writes in a manner that gets the general message across but makes frequent typos & grammatical errors that occasionally obscure meaning	Writes in a convoluted, distracting manner & makes significant typos & grammatical errors that often obscure meaning

The department is responsible for several programs (Geography, Geographic Information Sciences, Earth Sciences, and Environmental Sciences) and by extension it offers a range of flexible core courses touching on a wide range of skills relating to information literacy, such as map reading (GEP 204- Basic Mapping), and communication skills, such as slideshow presentation (ENV 210 Introduction to Environmental Sciences). Detailed information was obtained from GEH 240 Urban Geography (taught and assessed by Dr. Angelika Winner) on how students did in a series of discussion board activities that helped evaluate both how well they used the information (information literacy) and how well they wrote (communication skills). The topics covered were well-aligned with Lehman College's ILO's and touched on a range of issues and skills as general as understanding the impact of transnational forces on cities or the diversity of experiences (such as access to transportation or informal urban spaces such as "slums") to discipline specific knowledge, like recognizing the various spatial structure cities take.

The course instructor assessed student performance using a 4-point scale (ranging from "unsatisfactory" to excellent") to evaluate both content and writing. The rubric item for content touched on information literacy because students were asked to include relevant information from the readings and various media and were also given the opportunity to bring as many elements as they saw fit to formulate an argument. The writing component of the rubric focused more on clarity and style.

GEH 240 CONTENT (INFORMATION LITERACY)					
Assignment/Criteria	Unsatisfactory (0.00 to 0.00%)	Fair (50.00 to 79.00%)	Good (80.00 to 89.00%)	Excellent (90.00 to 100.00%)	N
Unit 1: The nature and development of cities	0	12% (4)	72% (23)	16% (5)	32
Unit 2, including globalization, neo-liberalism, gentrification and the structure of cities	0	3% 1	63% (22)	34% 12	35
Unit 3, including rural-urban migration, segregation and urban sprawl	0	5% (1)	62% (13)	33% (7)	21
Unit 4, covering transportation equity and urban planning	0	0	82% (9)	18% 2	11
Unit 5, informal settlements (e.g. "slums")	0	0	79% (15)	21% (4)	19
Rubric explanation: **Unsatisfactory**=No posting; unacceptable content; **Fair**=Difficult to follow; key issues from the questions are not identified or answered; not all questions answered; **Good**= Discussed at surface level; key issues from the questions are identified but not all are answered thoroughly; mostly clear discussion; **Excellent**= Discussed thoughtfully and with insight; Key issues from the questions are identified and answered; Clear discussion with no digressions					

In addition to the effectiveness of the content, the discussion board posts were evaluated for the style of writing. On this criteria of success, students performed even better with 57 to 72% of discussion board posts being rated as excellent on writing.

GEH 240 WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS					
Assignment/Criteria	Unsatisfactory (0.00 to 50.00%)	Fair (50.00 to 79.00%)	Good (80.00 to 89.00%)	Excellent (90.00 to 100.00%)	N
Unit 1: The nature and development of cities	0	3% (1)	25% (8)	72% (23)	32
Unit 2, including globalization, neo-liberalism, gentrification and the structure of cities	0	3% (1)	37% (13)	60% (21)	35
Unit 3, including rural-urban migration, segregation and urban sprawl	0	5% (1)	38% (8)	57% (12)	21
Unit 4, covering transportation equity and urban planning	0	0	36% (4)	64% (7)	11
Unit 5, informal settlements (e.g. "slums")	0	0	37% (7)	63% (12)	19
Rubric explanation: **Unsatisfactory**=No posting; unacceptable writing; **Fair**= Poorly written with grammatical and stylistic errors possibly resulting in a difficult to understand post; **Good**= Decent writing with some grammatical or stylistic errors; **Excellent**= Well written with no grammatical or stylistic errors					

HISTORY

History instructors as well as academic librarians recognize that engaging with primary sources, such as archival materials or original texts by classic historians, is a central component of information literacy (Pettersson, 2022). Moreover, historians have noted that the use of primary sources enhances analytical and critical thinking skills, leading to overall better argumentation in written work (Westhoff, 2009). The history faculty at Lehman College have embraced this approach by making the critical reading of primary sources a central component of information literacy and written assignments, at times even asking students to critically evaluate the reliability and generalizability of classic work in light of new evidence.

Description of activities/skills in flexible core history courses			
Course name	Sections	Information Literacy	Communication Skill
HIS 240 East Asian Civilizations (William Wooldridge)	2	Evaluation of the reliability and generalizability of information found in a source by a dead historian based on new information found in a new source	A critique of the source by the dead historian based on new information
HIS 241 Early Modern Europe (Victoria Calabrese)	1	Critical reading of primary sources	Formulating a written argument based on the critical reading of primary sources
HIS 246 Civilizations of the Ancient World (Mark Wilson)	1	Critical reading of a primary source	Formulating a written argument based on the critical reading of primary source
HIS 249 Islamic Civilization (Dina LeGall)	1	Critical reading of a primary source	Formulating a written argument based on the critical reading of primary source

The history program included four flexible courses in their evaluation and had instructors, teaching such diverse topics as ancient civilizations and early modern Europe, use the same rubric that they developed. For information literacy, the extent to which students were able to find appropriate sources and critically evaluate them was scored on a 6-point scale (0 to 5), while writing was evaluated for clarity and effective use of the evidence. All in all the work of 81 students enrolled in flexible core courses offered by the History department was evaluated.

Rubric developed and implemented in history courses with scores							
Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Information literacy	The writing shows no evidence of having sources	The writing has sources, but the nature of the sources is unclear	The writing uses appropriate source material but does not evaluate it	The writing involves minimal evaluation of the reliability and contents of sources	The writing uses appropriate source material in an appropriate manner by critically examining the contents and reliability of sources..	The writing makes use of exceptional sources. Discussion of the sources is complete, and it uses sources in an exemplary manner.	
% and number of students	0	7.4% (6)	34.6% (28)	29.6% (24)	25% (20)	6.2% (5)	81
Written communication	The writing does not make sense	The arguments and ideas can be discerned, but only on multiple readings	The writing includes and argument but not supporting ideas, or has no argument	The argument is clear and is mostly supported with evidence	The argument and supporting ideas are clear and mostly convincing.	0mThe writing is outstanding: argument and ideas are clear and convincing.	
% and number of students	0	3.7% (3)	16% (13)	38% (31)	36% (29)	6.2% (5)	81

Students who scored between 3 and 5 on the IL item, in other words who touched on the reliability of the content found in the source, made up slightly over 60% (score of 3, 4 and 5 on information literacy) of the 81 students in five flexible core sections of the History Department, while more than 83% wrote a clear argument supported with evidence (written communication score of 3, 4 and 5). These are very encouraging results, that do showcase that the College's, the program and its instructors' endeavors to incorporate written communication has worked. There also seems to be a link between IL and the quality of writing. Thus, the campus community and Department of History can further encourage exposing students on how to evaluate the reliability of sources so that performance in IL improves synergistically with the quality of writing.

LATIN AMERICAN AND LATINO STUDIES

The Latin American and Latino Studies Department used LAC 231 (LTS 242) *Latinos in the United States* (taught by Dr. Berberena Alonso) for gen ed assessment. Specifically, students were asked to share one image which they felt was "representative of what [they] believe to encompass 'Latino identity', or 'Latino-ness (Latinidad)'" based on class discussion. They were then given several prompts to complete a reflection piece on why they chose the image and why they felt it was reflective of the Latino experience. This assignment fits with an emerging approach in the social sciences that uses the analysis of visual materials as part of experiential learning in order to help convey complex concepts and notions (e.g. Earnest & Fish, 2014).

26 students completed the assignment (while at the time of the evaluation 10 were missing work). The extent to which students mastered the activity was gauged using a 6-point scale to determine whether they had exceeded (3-5), met (1-2), or failed to meet (0) the expectation.

REFLECTION ON LATINO IDENTITY THROUGH AN IMAGE WITH RUBRIC SCORES				
Skills/Score	Did Not Meet 0	Met 1-2	Exceeded 3-5	Total Students
Organization (Writing)	0% (0)	50% (13)	50% (13)	100% (26)
Reflection (IL and Writing)	0% (0)	46.2% (12)	53.8% (14)	100% (26)
Relevance and Originality (IL and Writing)	0% (0)	38.5% (10)	61.5% (16)	100% (26)

The students embraced the project, as a greater number scored on relevance and originality (presumably because they spent some time looking for images they liked). This is encouraging. The literature on teaching and learning has shown that combining the analysis of visual information with spending more time on writing helps strengthen all the skills involved.

PHILOSOPHY

The Philosophy Department and Assessment Coordinator (Collin O'Neil) went through the meaningful process of relating information literacy and written communication skills to their discipline. Based on this reflection, good writing in philosophy assignments was defined as having "a clear thesis, [and] clarity of expression. The writing should be jargon-free (any technical terms must be defined) and paragraphs should be short and make only one main point. The exposition should reconstruct the author's argument in a way that would make sense to a reader who has not read the article." Moreover, the ability to find objections and responses to the objections are prized in the discipline. Thus, the assignments were evaluated based on the quality of the: writing, organization, exposition, argumentation, and originality. As for information literacy in introductory courses, the discipline and program, according to the Assessment Coordinator, favored engaging and using a handful of sources well rather than finding a multitude of sources. This practice helps students develop original thought and train them in theorizing. Thus, information literacy is evaluated based on: (1) the clarity and appropriateness of the research question, (2) the appropriateness of the sources for the

research question and as a source of argument/counterargument, (3) the use of sources (critically evaluating their argument, citing and paraphrasing only when appropriate) and (4) mastering a style (citing sources and writing citations in appropriate format). Two courses were included in the gen ed assessment: PHI 171 *Problems of Philosophy* (taught by Jose Muniz and Collin O'Neil) and 169 *Critical Reasoning* (Jodell Ulerie)

ASSESSMENT OF PHI 171 *PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY*

In PHI 171 the four main assignments used to foster and evaluate both IL and written communication were 600-700 words essays using philosophy to engage with an author's argument about a real-life problem. These ranged from the role of God, the state's ability to tax and coerce, to the ethics of meat-eating and organ distribution. Information literacy figured in the "content" and was evaluated based on whether students were able to tease out "the best form of the author's argument", while writing needed to be clear and understandable by an educated audience with no prior knowledge of the issue.

PHI 171: IL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION RUBRIC SCORES						
Assignment	**Criterion**	**Lacking**	**Novice**	**Competent**	**Proficient**	**N**
assignment 1 "Can God Allow Suffering?" or "Why You Should Bet on God".	Content	0%	23% (6)	35% (9)	42% (11)	26
assignment 1	Organization	4% (1)	19% (5)	38% (10)	38% (10)	26
assignment 1	Grammar, Diction, Voice	4% (1)	12% (3)	38% (10)	46% (12)	26
assignment 2 "*Against Prison & Taxes"*	Content	0%	5% (1)	50% (10)	45% (9)	20
	Organization	0%	0%	50% (10)	50% (10)	20
	Grammar, Diction, Voice	0%	0%	45% (9)	55% (11)	20
assignment 3; ethics of eating meat	Content	0%	6% (1)	38% (6)	56% (9)	16
	Organization	0%	25% (4)	19% (3)	56% (9)	16
	Grammar, Diction, Voice	0%	12% (2)	38% (6)	50% (8)	16
assignment 4 ethics of organ distribution	Content	0%	6% (1)	38% (5)	56% (7)	13
	Organization	0%	25% (3)	19% (2)	56% (8)	13
	Grammar, Diction, Voice	0%	12% (2)	38% (5)	50% (6)	13

DESCRIPTION OF RUBRIC ITEMS (Prepared by Collin O'Neil)

Proficient: The paper presents ideas with clarity and depth. Philosophical concepts are well explained, and the problem being addressed is fully expressed. Explanations are thorough enough that a college-educated reader who has not taken the course can understand without difficulty.

Competent: The philosophical ideas or concepts are explained, though some explanations may lack depth or precision. The problem the paper addresses is stated, and key elements are present. A college-educated reader outside the class could follow the argument, though some areas may require clarification.

Novice: Effort has been made to explain concepts, but explanations are incomplete or unclear. The problem the paper addresses is only partially developed, leaving gaps in understanding.

Lacking: The paper does not meet the standard of academic work. Ideas are unclear or unexplained, and the argument lacks coherence. Concepts are presented without explanation or contextualization. There are issues regarding academic honesty or integrity.

ORGANIZATION

Proficient: The paper is well-structured with a clear thesis and logical organization. Each paragraph presents a single idea, and transitions between paragraphs are smooth. Arguments are developed with explicit reasoning leading to well-supported conclusions.

Competent: The paper is divided properly into paragraphs, each with a clear focus. A thesis statement is present, though it may not be strongly detailed. Explicit reasons are provided for conclusions, though some structural elements could be refined.

Novice: There is some organizational structure, but it is not well developed. Paragraphs may contain multiple ideas, and the thesis statement may be unclear or difficult to locate. Some reasoning is provided, but connections between ideas may be weak.

Lacking: The paper lacks clear structure. Paragraphs do not follow a logical progression, and there is no evident thesis. Arguments appear disjointed, and transitions are ineffective or absent.

GRAMMAR, DICTION, AND VOICE

Proficient: Demonstrates strong command of grammar, diction, and voice. Sentences are well-constructed, and word choice enhances clarity and argumentation. The paper is academic, and reads smoothly.

Competent: Uses grammatical sentences with occasional errors that do not interfere with readability. The voice is generally consistent, and word choice is appropriate, but may lack refinement.

Novice: Some grammatical issues and awkward phrasing make parts of the paper difficult to read. The voice is inconsistent, and word choice may be imprecise or overly simplistic.

Lacking: Frequent grammatical errors obscure meaning. Sentence structure is awkward, and word choice is imprecise. The paper does not demonstrate a clear or consistent voice.

In terms of information literacy and critical thinking skills, as illustrated by the ability to find and express the author's best argument and formulate and argument for/against it, students in PHI 171

did overall well. With most students showing levels of accomplishments at the competent and proficient levels in all four assignments. As importantly, students have improved throughout the semester with more than 90% of students attaining these two levels of proficiency in the last three assignments when compared to 77% of students who were either competent or proficient in the first assignment. Lehman College's various units should ensure that students are advised well so that more of them turn in assignments throughout the semester to benefit from the same level of progress.

More detailed evaluation of a sample of 8 assignments, provided by the Assessment Coordinator, offered a more vivid description of the criteria for success in 100-level Philosophy courses. An assignment on the state, taxes and prison that was deemed to be "competent" on all three levels was thought to "demonstrate a solid understanding of the author's argument against prison and taxes, effectively explaining the Jasmine analogy and capturing the central challenge to government authority [...] [But the essay] lacks a clear statement of [the student's own] position. The organization is logical in the sections presented, with good paragraph structure and transitions, but the incomplete nature of the submission prevents a higher score." An essay on organ distribution that was deemed "competent" on content and "proficient" on organization and writing was believed to "do a good job of explaining in [simple words] why Organ Distribution poses a problem for utilitarianism. [the student examined] a promising morally relevant difference [but needed to explore the moral relevance of different scenarios more]"

ASSESSMENT OF PHI 169 *CRITICAL REASONING*

The Assessment Coordinator did a more in-depth evaluation of five sample assignments for PHI 169 to highlight the various components of communication and information literacy skills in philosophy. The assignments thus evaluated included a very engaging range of timely topics from abortion as a human right to the stakes at play behind TikTok ban. As shown in the table below, students overall did well on several dimensions of information literacy skills applicable to many disciplines, ranging from formulating a research question to finding appropriate sources and presenting them. "Attribution" or citing the sources seems to an area that can be improved, presumably later in students' careers at Lehman College thanks to exposure to discipline-specific IL and style guides in more advanced courses.

PHI 169 : EVALUATING THE DIMENSIONS OF INFORMATION LITERACY (scored out of 100, n=5)								
Assignment	Research Question Clarity	Narrow Question	Sources	Counter-argument	Source Exposition	Critical Evaluation	Appropriate Quotation	Attribution
Abortion as a fundamental human right	90	70	80	100	80	80	100	50
Justice and morality of death penalty	90	70	60	60	72	72	70	80
TikTok ban: liberty vs. security	90	90	100	100	88	88	50	50
Cancel culture as digital justice	80	90	100	100	88	80	60	60
Ethical reasoning in animal testing debate	90	80	100	100	92	92	80	70

In addition to IL, communication skills were also gauged through a more in-depth analysis of the same five assignments. On this dimension too students did overall well on a range of indicators of success ranging from the clarity of writing to how convincing the argumentation is.

PHI 169: EVALUATING THE DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNICATION (scored out of 100)					
Assignment	Writing	Organization	Exposition	Argumentation	Originality
Abortion as a fundamental human right	80	83.33	83.33	85	70
Justice and morality of death penalty	80	83.33	83.33	70	70
TikTok ban: liberty vs. security	80	86.66	90	85	50
Cancel culture as digital justice	80	83.33	83.33	80	60
Ethical reasoning in animal testing debate	90	90	86.66	90	60

During the AY24-25 a brief survey of sociology faculty teaching flexible core courses was done in order to determine what kinds of IL and communication skills related activity they incorporated. A significant component of sociology courses tied to information literacy involves access to sources of secondary data in order to answer research questions. In one section of SOC 166 *Fundamentals of Sociology* (taught by Janet Michelo) the activities ranged from commenting on food/health equity by determining the relationship between the profile (neighborhood and kind of cuisine) of restaurants and their health grades (as found in the NYC Department of Health website). In another course (SOC 223 *Quantitative Reasoning for the Social Sciences* taught by Elin Waring) students collected country-level data to compare differences in their levels of development, while in one SOC 235 *Education and Society* (taught by Christopher Bonastia) students practiced using data in order to comment on the validity of readings' arguments.

Other courses, such as one section of SOC 166 *Fundamentals of Sociology* (Susan Markens) and one section of SOC 234 *Urban Sociology* (Nara Roberta Molla da Silva) focused on engaging with news media in order to find articles that illustrated the material. Finally, many courses involved library research to find peer reviewed sources and the use of proper citation styles, some like SOC 227 *Sociology of the Family* (Dale Patrias) organizing a library visit accompanied by a related bibliography assignment.

SURVEY OF SOCIOLOGY FACULTY ABOUT COURSE ACTIVITIES		
Course name	**Information Literacy**	**Communication Skills**
SOC 166 Fundamentals of Sociology (Janet Michelo)	Obtaining information from the NYC Health Department, including info about neighborhoods	Presenting the NYC Health Department Data
SOC 166 Fundamentals of Sociology (Susan Markens)	*Current Events Portfolio* containing 4 recent newspaper articles with 2-3 pages summaries of each connecting them to the course	Summary of the newspaper articles connecting them to the course, with a power point presentation of ome
SOC 223 Quantitative Reasoning for Soc Sci (Elin Waring)	Collecting data comparing countries at different levels of development	Slide presentation of the development data
SOC 227 Sociology of the Family (Dale Patrias)	Library visit accompanied by an assignment in order to find a peer reviewed research article	Summary of academic articles in order to lead class discussions
SOC 235 Education and Society (Christopher Bonastia)	Class discussion of data (quantitative or qualitative), including a discussion of what additional data is needed to make an author's argument more convincing	Educational autobiography (draft and then final submission) connecting students' own experiences to sociological concepts discussed in the course.
SOC 234 Urban Sociology (Nara Roberta Molla da Silva)	Finding news article showcasing one of the urban social problems discussed in the course reading	students submit a proposal and a standard final paper.

As for IL assessment, an assignment directly intended to develop information literacy skills was used in SOC 166 taught by Janet Michelo. It called on students to find data about the US using the CIA factbook, in addition to figuring out facts such as the three countries with the longest/shortest lifespans. 18 students completed the 20-question activity, and their levels of achievement were as follows:

SOC 166 FUNDAMENTALS OF SOCIOLOGY: FINDING INFORMATION FROM THE CIA FACTBOOK						
Level of accomplishment (with % grade)	1 0-29	2 30-49	3 50-69	4 70-89	5 90-100	N
Percentage and number of students	9.09 2	4.54 1	27.27 6	22.72 5	36.36 8	22

A large proportion of the class (nearly 87%) were able to find more than half of the information required from the CIA factbook obtaining 50 to 100% on the assignment. Of those, 36.36% were able to find at least 18 out of the 20, while just under 60% were able to find at least 14 of the 20 items required. The assignment therefore was an overall success in terms of introducing students to information literacy and important resources like the CIA factbook early on in their academic career. The campus can discuss how to incorporate more of these kinds of assignments so that even more students score well.

There are two sets of recommendations. One is to improve the process of general education assessment and the other to continue building on the work the Lehman College campus has done to foster learning goals such as information literacy and communication skills.

The bottom-up approach to Gen Ed assessment was a new pilot project developed throughout the AY24-25 to balance multiple needs and concerns. The contribution of all participating programs has been extremely valuable, especially since they were asked to do something new. It is, thus, worthwhile to formulate a few recommendations based on the response and feedback in order to improve the process in the future.

- ✓ Participation by School has been uneven with NSS and Arts and Humanities programs providing more information. Deans and Associate Deans from various schools can be contacted early to encourage participation from more programs from across campus.

- ✓ While the amount of information required to complete the assessment of gen ed was fairly minimal – rubric scores and a description of the activity relating to the learning outcomes–, many programs expressed concerns that it would be onerous for their faculty (especially part-timers). More can be done through direct outreach to explain that the information is already generated by instructors in the normal act of teaching.

- ✓ The work of faculty can be showcased so that it also benefits their academic careers.

- ✓ If programs did not provide information because they feel that they do not cover the ILO's assessed during AY24-25, they could have an internal conversation about whether these are worth integrating in the future or whether they already are covered in various forms.

- ✓ If programs did not participate because of lack of personnel, they could consider finding ways to make this information more manageable by developing rubrics or by finding information that already exists through the natural practice of teaching and learning (such as grades that already reflect how students do on various tasks).

- ✓ Participation can be increased and the findings made more meaningful by: (1) providing training on such things as rubrics, assignment development, and (2) also showing faculty and Assessment Coordinators how participating in assessment activities can be used in their own careers as scholar-teachers

Recommendations to further foster institutional learning objectives, include but are not limited to:

- ✓ The range of activities Lehman College students engage in in flexible core courses is highly interesting and the tools used by faculty to evaluate them relevant to general education. Thus, the College should continue showcasing the work of its students and faculty centered around discipline-specific work, as they align well with the broader Institutional Learning Outcomes.

- ✓ Given how well discipline specific goals align with general education skills, programs should not shy away from including sample sections from flexible/required courses into their program assessment. One possible use would be to compare levels of accomplishment on the same skill in more introductory general/flexible core courses to those achieved in higher-level required courses. This way, they can assess the improvement of students throughout their trajectory in the program at the same time as they contribute to gen ed assessment on campus.

- ✓ The administration can facilitate the above by advertising more widely its gen ed assessment schedule so that programs can align their activities. In addition, the process can start earlier in the academic year, with plans about which skills will be assessed announced the previous year and calls for materials sent early in the fall'

- ✓ Finally, the report should be shared with the Lehman College community, starting with the Senate, the Assessment Committee, and the Deans of various schools and Chairs of various programs to gain their feedback.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EVALUATING FLEXIBLE CORE AND REQUIRED CORE COURSES FOR GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

OBJECTIVE | The goal over the next few years is to let departments and their assessment coordinators, with the help of the Office for Educational Effectiveness, embed the assessment of some of the institutional learning objectives (ILO) into their flexible core and required core courses.

- ✓ Check here and on CUNY first to see if your department is offering any of these courses in the Spring of 2025. https://www.lehman.edu/academics/general-education-requirements.php

- ✓ Check with your instructors, curricular map and various syllabi, to see whether information literacy and communication skills broadly defined overlap with those courses' learning outcomes.

WHAT IS BEING ASSESSED? | With your participation, the Office for Educational Effectiveness will document the instruction of Information Literacy and Communication skills. https://www.lehman.edu/engage/. Check with instructors and with the archive of syllabi to see whether there are assignments or activities in these courses that cover information literacy or communication skills, and whether they are being evaluated in a way that would allow you to report *outcomes that are measured by a rubric item already used in the course* OR whether you should add a rubric item provided by the Assessment Liaison.

WHY IS IT BEING ASSESSED THIS WAY? | During the last four years, the office of educational effectiveness has used a variety of approaches: contacting departments through the Assessment Fellow, using surveys of faculty, and sending assessment instruments directly. However, general education assessment works best if it is discipline-specific (communication skills or information literacy are vague concepts if there is not some framework to define them).

THE ADVANTAGES OF ASSESSING GENERAL EDUCATION FOR YOUR PROGRAM |

- ✓ Builds a shared culture and is a good way for onboarding instructors into a course.
- ✓ Provides a sense of whether students are enjoying your "gateway courses"
- ✓ Allows you to assess certain skills when they are first introduced, providing a baseline for comparison with higher level courses

TIMELINE |

- ✓ January 22-February 10: compile information about required core and flexible core courses (which ones are being offered, whether they already have an activity/assignment and rubric item measuring communication skills and/or information literacy)

- ✓ February 10th report list of courses, assignments and whether a rubric exists to the Assessment fellow. If the course does not cover these learning outcomes (information

literacy or communication skills just report that you have no course and consider incorporating the ILOs in the future, if appropriate).

- ✓ February 15th – March 30th work with the assessment fellow to add a rubric (if missing). This will be a simplified version of the AAC&U's VALUE rubrics, focusing on a handful of items.

- ✓ April-June work with instructors to get their rubric scores and/or collect artifacts, write up your general feelings/observations

- ✓ June-August the assessment fellow works on the report to share with you and the campus community.

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY DRAFTED YOUR ASSESSMENT PLAN AND ARE CONFIDENT THAT THESE ARE THE AREAS YOU WANT TO ASSESS | Add sections of flexible core courses to the plan so that you can assess whether some of your program learning outcomes are in fact introduced there. This will also help you form a baseline to compare students in more advanced courses to.

THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE COMPILE AND ANY QUESTIONS can be shared with the Assessment fellow through his email address: devrim.yavuz@lehman.cuny.edu

FAQ

What if our flexible/required core courses do not cover information literacy or communication skills?

If this is the case, you do not need to participate in the assessment activity. But keep an eye out for other ILO's in upcoming years that will be assessed. Also consider whether those specific goals could be worth adding to your program/course-level objectives with your Department.

What if we have too many flexible core courses and/or too many sections?

Use a combination of all these approaches: focus on a handful of representative sections, see whether instructors are already using rubric items/scores that can be easily reported, and/or collect a sample of artifacts from various instructors using similar prompts (for instance finding sources or writing a review).

We have assessed flexible core courses and areas that mesh well with the college's ILO and general education requirements in the past, what can be done with the results?

If your program has assessed these, please share this information with the Assessment Fellow and we will try to highlight your assessment activities.

APPENDIX II: Survey of courses

SURVEY OF REQUIRED AND FLEXIBLE CORE COURSES: COVERAGE OF INFORMATION LITERACY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS BY COURSE
(as reported by assessment coordinators, faculty and chairs)

Department	Courses (and number of sections)	# of sect with IL	# of sect with COM	Activity example
Art	ARH 141 Introduction to Modern Art (3)	3	3	Museum response paper
	ARH 143 Introduction to the History of Latin American Art	1	1	Research paper
English	ENG 222 Literary Genres	1	1	Nonfiction essay on a contemporary issue.
	ENG 223 English Literature	NA	1	Research paper about course readings
	ENG 228 Literature and Medicine ✓	NA	1	3-4 pages embodiment narrative
	ENG 234 Women in Literature	NA	1	Reflection on the experience of reading a poem
Earth, Environmental, and Geospatial Sciences	GEO101 Dynamic Earth	NA	NA	
	GEH 240 Urban Geography ✓	1	1	Discussion board posts engaging with data and course concepts
	GEP 204 Basic Mapping (4)	4	4	Interpreting a variety of maps using paper maps, Google Maps, ArcGIS Pro
	ENV 210	1	1	Exams and presentation include information literacy about he subject matter
	ENV/GEH 235 Conservation of the Environment	1	1	Exams and presentation include information literacy about he subject matter
	GEH 101: An Introduction to Geography (2)	2	2	Critical analysis of maps

Department	Courses (and number of sections)	# of sect with IL	# of sect with COM	Activity example
History	HIS 240 East Asian Civs (2) ✓	2	2	Critical reading of primary sources with response papers
	HIS 241 Early Modern Europe ✓	1	1	
	HIS 246 Civilizations of the Ancient World ✓	1	1	
	HIS 249 Islamic Civilizations ✓	1	1	
Latin American and Latino Studies	LAC 231 (LTS 242) Latinos in the United States ✓	1	1	Visual representation of Latino culture assignment
	LAC 214 Literature of the Caribbean and its Diaspora	1	1	Class presentation on research conducted for the course
Philosophy	PHI 169 Critical Reasoning ✓	1	1	Engaging with philosophical writing and applying it to a real-world problem
	PHI 171 Problems of Philosophy ✓	1	1	
Sociology	SOC 166 (2) ✓	2	2	Accessing neighborhood data and news using news articles
	SOC 223 Quantitative Reasoning for Social Sciences	1	1	Accessing and presenting country-level development data
	SOC 227 Sociology of the Family	1	1	Library search
	SOC 234 Urban Sociology	1	1	Finding news articles and final essays
	SOC 235 Education and Society	1	1	Discussion of data and educational autobiography
7 Departments	25 Courses and 33 sections surveyed	29 reported IL activities	32 reported COM activities	

✓ Courses with a checkmark provided assessment data

JavaScript isn't enabled in your browser, so this file can't be opened. Enable and reload.

Assessment of Flexible and Required Core Courses

Thank you for taking the time to help us with collecting this information and for helping move forward with assessment of information literacy and written communication skills in flexible and/or required core courses. Please refer to the general education page to determine whether your department/program is responsible for any of our general education courses:

https://www.lehman.edu/academics/general-education-requirements.php

Instructions:

1) If you are not offering any of the courses this semester please ignore the form

2) Please fill a separate form for each flexible/required core course your program offers

3) Please fill only one common form for all sections of the same course (e.g. if you have three sections, one form for the whole course is enough)

4) Fill the form even if the course does not cover information literacy or written communication skills. Knowing the share of courses in which students are exposed to this is useful information in itself. You could also discuss as a program whether you would want to add these skills in the future.

5) Please contact Devrim Yavuz if you have any questions: devrim.yavuz@lehman.cuny.edu

* Indicates required question

1.

Which course are you filling out this form for? Please include the course number and name (e.g. GEH 240: Urban Geography) Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â
*

2.

Who will serve as point person for any information we might need about this course of for any further action? Please provide the name, last name, and email address of the assessment coordinator, chair or instructor we should reach out to for results or to work together in order to develop a simple rubric. *

3.

How many sections of the course are offered in the Spring 2025? *

Mark only one oval.

1

2

3

4

More than 4

4.

How many sections will have an activity/assignment linked to information literacy as defined by your program/discipline? *

Mark only one oval.

1

2

3

4

More than 4

NONE

5.

Please briefly describe one of the activities that best represents the types of work students are asked to do linked to information literacy in this course. If there are none simply skip the question.

6.

How many of the above sections already employ a rubric or grade to evaluate information literacy with easy to communicate scores (for example an instructor that is already grading the quality of sources on a scale of 1 to 4 might be able to tell us how students generally did).Â
*

Mark only one oval.

1

2

3

4

More than 4

NONE

7.

Please briefly describe one of the rubrics that is being used for information literacy, If none, please skip.

8.

How many sections will have an activity/assignment that develops written communication skills as defined by your program/discipline? *

Mark only one oval.

1

2

3

4

More than 4

NONE

9.

Please briefly describe one of the activities that best represents the types of work students are asked to do linked to written communication skills in this course. If there are none, simply skip the question.

10.

How many of the above sections already employ a rubric or grade to evaluate communication skills with easy to report scores (for example an instructor that is already grading on a scale of 1 to 4 how well students discuss different perspectives might be able to tell us how students generally did).Â

Mark only one oval.

1

2

3

4

More than 4

NONE

11.

Please briefly describe one of the rubrics that is being used for communication skills. If the same as the previous one, just write "SAME".

12.

Lastly, do you have any questions/comments?

Google [Forms](#)