

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION:	Senate
FROM:	Elizabeth Elle, Vice-Provost, Learning & Teaching and Chair, Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning <i>Elizabeth Elle</i>
RE:	Educational Goals and Assessment Plan
DATE:	18 May 2022

SCUTL recommends the attached Educational Goals for SFU Undergraduates, and associated assessment plan, to Senate for adoption.

The Educational Goals were brought to Senate for discussion last year, and were largely positively received. Feedback from that meeting, from further consultation with the Department of Indigenous Studies, and from a websurvey opened to the SFU community was incorporated into the goals. The proposed assessment plan includes some general principles for how assessment should occur, and an initial exploration of the landscape of what students have the opportunity to learn during their time at SFU. We anticipate making regular updates to Senate as the work progresses.

Proposed Institutional Educational Goals for Simon Fraser University Undergraduates

Preamble:

As an institution, we are dedicated to preparing students for lifelong learning, and to producing community-engaged and responsible citizens who demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior. We value a community founded on principles of respect for knowledge, truth, and scholarship. Our graduates are critical and creative thinkers, skilled at problem solving and equipped for the challenges of the future.

A. Our students are practical, creative, and critical thinkers.

They have the capacity to:

- 1) Articulate broad and deep knowledge of a field of study, including core assumptions, key concepts, standard methodologies, and common approaches, both theoretical and applied.
- 2) Pose thoughtful questions, analyze and interpret information and arguments, and apply information from multiple disciplines to solve problems.
- 3) Engage critically in experiential activities to demonstrate a reflective and integrated understanding and develop practical, creative, and scholarly solutions.

B. Our students are strong, purposeful, and inclusive communicators.

They can:

- 1) Analyze and interpret ideas through various media, including but not limited to effective written, verbal, quantitative, and visual arguments.
- 2) Evaluate and use source materials effectively and ethically to support and advance ongoing and new knowledge.
- 3) Promote inclusive, collaborative problem-solving through respectful interpersonal communication.

C. Our students are community-engaged individuals.

They have learned to:

- 1) Respect Indigenous communities' goals of self-determination and well being, and actively engage in SFU's collective responsibility of working towards Reconciliation.
- 2) Understand and respect diversity, practice inclusion, work towards equity, and gain and promote understanding of local, regional, and global communities.
- 3) Evaluate ethical values and the social context of problems; apply diverse perspectives in scholarship.
- 4) Contribute to the communities in which they work and live through reciprocal and respectful relationship building, and participate in community-embedded challenges or opportunities.

Assessment of Institutional Educational Goals

Principles

- SFU aims to improve the undergraduate experience by identifying and assessing institutional Educational Goals (EGs). The EGs are meant to capture our commitments to and aspirations for undergraduate education at SFU. EGs should be thoughtfully re-examined on a regular basis.
- Our Educational Goals were developed in consultation with the university community, and our assessment plan must likewise be developed in consultation with our community. The assessment plan should, like the EGs themselves, be regularly re-examined and updated.
- We do not anticipate that all institutional EGs will be addressed within all undergraduate programs, nor do we expect programs to align their EGs to the institutional EGs. Our general education requirements (including Writing, Quantitative, and Breadth courses) and students' co-curricular experiences (co-op, student governance, etc.) contribute to preparing our graduates for life after university.
- The assessment work associated with institutional EGs will not be the responsibility of departments/schools or Faculties, but will be carried out by central units such as the offices of Learning Experiences Assessment and Planning, Institutional Research and Planning, and University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison. However, if programs are interested and data are available (for instance, from external reviews) and articulate well with institutional EGs, such data could be used to highlight departmental efforts and student achievements. Piloting this approach by partnering with a few interested departments/faculties would be useful.
- The student voice must be included in our assessment, through existing surveys (e.g. UGSS) or other instruments aimed at understanding the experience of students and/or alumni.
- Learnings from assessment of EGs should circle back to action, again with the goal of improving undergraduate education at SFU. The timeline should reflect the normal timeline for external reviews at SFU, with a 7 year cycle and reporting in years 4 and 7.

Background

Measuring the effectiveness of the institution in educating students and preparing them for success after graduation is important, but also complex. Institutional assessments often include information from multiple sources including programs (who self-assess regularly as part of our external review process), required general education courses, and students' reflection on their learning.

The assessment of EGs involves the collection and analysis of **direct evidence** (e.g. student performance on a particular learning task, such as course work) and **indirect evidence** which is often student self-assessment of achievement (e.g. data from surveys or focus groups with students or alumni). We can also consider **learning opportunities** linked to particular goals, either within students' programs, through our general education requirements (W, Q, B courses), or via co-curricular activities.

SFU is new to the process of assessing Institutional Educational Goals, which are still undergoing an approval process. Our initial assessment plan must therefore include at least two stages.

Understand the landscape. We need to begin by analyzing learning opportunities, considering available indirect evidence such as survey instruments, and discussing with departments and faculties the availability and form of direct evidence from their programs they might be willing to share. These aspects of our landscape are presented in more detail in the next section.

To parallel the previous research that examined the EGs set by other institutions, SFU should also review assessment plans for university-level goals that are in use by the sector, where these are available; an initial scan suggests that program information tends to be used to evaluate institutional EGs.

Refine the plan. Findings from both our internal work on learning opportunities and our external scan of other institutions will be used to create a more refined plan for EG assessment and institutional improvement. We may also learn new things about the proposed EGs during this process that may lead to refinement or adaptation of our educational goals.

First Steps: Understanding the Landscape

1) Learning Opportunities Analysis

Program Educational Goals are included in the public external review reports brought to Senate. Now that all programs have set EGs we have compiled them, and are mapping them to Institutional EGs. This mapping will improve our understanding of how many of the Institutional EGs are included in some form as part of the expectations of undergraduate programs.

We currently require students to take Breadth (B) courses in Science, Social Science, and Humanities, as well as Quantitative (Q) and Writing-Intensive (W) courses. Some of the Institutional EGs are likely to be addressed through these general education requirements, so a review of W, Q, and B course expectations will provide useful information.

Students also have important learning experiences outside of the classroom. The Co-Curricular Record (CCR) provides insight into the learning outcomes of co-curricular activities. These will be mapped against the proposed Institutional EGs.

2) Surveys as Indirect Evidence

We currently ask students to complete multiple surveys about their learning experiences. These include the internal Undergraduate Student Survey, as well as Province- and Nation-wide surveys (BC Baccalaureate Graduate Survey, Canadian University Survey Consortium, National Survey of Student Engagement). An exploration of how existing survey questions map onto our proposed Institutional EGs will improve our understanding of available indirect evidence. Existing surveys are preferable when available so students are not asked to complete additional surveys.

3) Collaborating with Programs

Departments assess student achievement in their programs as part of SFU's external review process, or for accreditation. Some units additionally have close ties to employers or alumni who might provide useful information. As part of building our new process, SFU should work with willing departments to explore how their data might inform our interpretation of institutional effectiveness at supporting student learning, and provide insight into how we can improve undergraduate education at SFU.

4) Other Metrics

Some institutions consider enrollment and graduation data as indicators of success. We have significant information about our institution and our students, collected and analyzed by the Institutional Research and Planning office. Whether these data are fit for our purpose needs further exploration.

5) What do other institutions do?

An initial scan suggests that many institutions rely on indirect evidence to assess educational goals. Some institutions require programs to collect direct evidence relevant to institutional goals, as well as any evidence

collected to assess program goals. A more fulsome understanding of what comparator institutions do will be useful as we refine our assessment plan in alignment with the principles in this document.