Harold Washington College Assessment Committee
General Education Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

General Education Goals:

Harold Washington College’s goals for student learning across its general education program are consistent with the foundation skills its faculty believes every educated adult should possess.

The primary goal of the HWC Assessment Program is to monitor the fulfillment of the General Education Objectives of the College. These skills are demonstrated by the ability of students:

- **Civic Engagement**: To demonstrate the knowledge, skills and values required of active citizenship in today’s world.
- **Critical Thinking**: To think critically and to analyze and solve problems.
- **Diversity**: To understand and respect human diversity in regard to race, ethnicity, gender, and other issues pertinent to improving human relations.
- **Effective Communication (Information and Computer Literacy, Oral, and Written)**: To communicate effectively, orally and in writing, and use information resources and technology competently.
- **Humanities and the Arts**: To understand and appreciate the arts, literature, history, and philosophical systems of major world cultures.
- **Natural Sciences**: To understand the major principles of the natural sciences and the application of the scientific method to biological, physical, and environmental systems.
- **Quantitative Reasoning**: To use mathematics for computation, reasoning, and problem solving.
- **Social Sciences**: To understand cultures, institutions, and patterns of human behavior and the application of the scientific method to their study.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Members of the Harold Washington College Assessment Committee have approved Student Learning Outcomes for the General Education goals.

The approved Student Learning Outcomes are as follows:

**Civic Engagement:**

*HWC General Education Goal*: To demonstrate the knowledge, skills and values required of active citizenship in today’s world.

*Student Learning Outcomes*: To show achievement of this General Education Goal, a student will:

1. Describe his or her own civic and cultural background, including its origins, development, assumptions and predispositions.
2. Explain his or her own position on a specific issue where one or more of these values or practices are involved.
3. Demonstrate an active role in a community context, such as: school, work, service, co-curricular activities, neighborhood or social group.
4. Examine the civic issues encountered and the insights gained from community experiences.
5. Contrast diverse positions, historical and contemporary, on selected democratic values or practices.

Adapted by the HWC Assessment Committee from associate degree level student learning outcomes in The Degree Qualifications Profile (2011) Lumina Educational Foundation Inc.

Last Updated and Assessed: Proposed for 2013 or 2014

Critical Thinking:

HWC General Education Goal: To think critically and to analyze and solve problems.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of the general education requirement for critical thinking, students will demonstrate:
1. Interpretation skills by formulating categories, making comparisons, and classifying and grouping data, findings, and opinions; distinguishing between direct and indirect persuasion; and clarifying meaning.
2. Analysis skills by detecting an argument and analyzing an argument.
3. Evaluation skills by...
   a. Evaluating the importance of an argument; the reasonableness of an argument; the credibility and reliability of sources of information; statistical information used as evidence to support an argument; how well an argument anticipates possible objectives or alternative positions; bias and contradictions in a person’s point of view; clear and consistent use of language.
   b. Determining if an argument rests on biased assumptions; how new data might confirm or question a conclusion; and how an argument makes sense.
   c. Judging the appropriateness of stated or unstated values or standards upheld in an argument; the consistency of supporting reasons; and the strength of an argument.
4. Inferences skills by collecting and questioning evidence; developing alternative hypotheses; and drawing conclusions

Last Updated and Assessed: 2003

Diversity

HWC General Education Goal: To understand and respect human diversity in regard to the full range of cognitive, behavioral, and affective practices and interactions through which human beings share life in common spaces.

Definition: Diversity is defined by such things as: age, citizenship, education, ethnicity, gender, health, language, marital status, national origin, political beliefs, physical attributes and disabilities, race,
religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, veteran status, and other differences in cultural expression and tradition.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Upon completion of the general education requirement for diversity, students will:

1. Identify a variety of cultural expressions and understand the contexts of those expressions through time, with acceptance and respect.
2. Recognize stereotypes, generalizations, and misperceptions of culture as limiting and potentially damaging.
3. Recognize one’s own cultural and personal biases and the impact these have on a variety of learning and life situations.
4. Demonstrate an active and regular engagement in exploring cultures, perspectives, and experiences different from one’s own, moving beyond tolerance toward embracing and celebrating these rich differences.

*Last Updated and Assessed: 2012*

**Effective Communication (Information and Computer Literacy):**

**HWC General Education Goal:** To communicate effectively, orally and in writing, and use information resources and technology competently.

**Definition:** The set of skills that enables individuals to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use the needed information.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Upon completion of an Associate degree, the information literate student:

1. Determines the nature and extent of the information needed;
2. Accesses needed information effectively and efficiently;
3. Evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected in formation into her/his knowledge base and value system;
4. Understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

*Last Updated and Assessed: 2004*

**Effective Communication (Oral):**

**HWC General Education Goal:** To communicate effectively, orally and in writing, and use information resources and technology competently.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Not yet written.

*Last Updated and Assessed: Proposed for 2013 or 2014*

**Effective Communication (Written):**
HWC General Education Goal: To communicate effectively, orally and in writing, and use information resources and technology competently.

Student Learning Outcomes: The student will be able to:
1. Compose texts across multiple disciplines and for various audiences, occasions, and purposes;
2. Construct texts for communication, information, and expression which adhere to the rules of Standard Written English;
3. Compose texts that are focused, well-organized, and well-developed.

Last Updated and Assessed: 2011

Humanities and the Arts:

HWC General Education Goal: To understand and appreciate the arts, literature, history, and philosophical systems of major world cultures.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of the General Education Requirements in arts and the humanities, students will demonstrate:
1. Analysis skills by identifying historical periods, major movements, and theories related to the evolution of a particular discipline.
2. Evaluation skills by establishing criteria to assess the major characteristics, and to draw inferences from a work (e.g., a painting, novel, play)
3. Interpretation skills by responding through the “self” to the synthesis and integration of analyzed and evaluated information.
4. Application skills by using techniques relative to the discipline to construct a physical manifestation as a vehicle for communication.
5. Communication skills by articulating ideas, emotions, or interpretations through dialogue, reading, writing, and visual imagery (e.g., an essay, an oral presentation, a painting).

Last Updated and Assessed: 2007

Natural Sciences:

HWC General Education Goal: To understand the major principles of the natural sciences and the application of the scientific method to biological, physical, and environmental systems.

Definition: The Natural Sciences encompass the life sciences (Biology, Zoology, and Botany) and the physical sciences (Physics, Chemistry, and Earth Sciences - Geology, Meteorology Oceanography and Astronomy). The Scientific Method is the process used to explore nature, and it is based on observations, predictions, experimental investigations, and theoretical explanations of natural phenomena. Application of the scientific method reveals patterns in the observed phenomena, which leads to the fundamental concepts, theories, and laws of the life and physical sciences.

Student Learning Outcomes: The student will be able to:
1. Formulate reasonable explanations of natural phenomena based on thorough observations.
2. Interpret and articulate scientific results that are presented in verbal, graphic and/or tabular form.
3. Critically evaluate scientific resources and scientific claims presented in the media.
4. Apply steps of the scientific method to solve problems.

Last Updated and Assessed: 2008

Quantitative Reasoning:

HWC General Education Goal: To use mathematics for computation, reasoning, and problem solving.

Definition: “To use mathematics for computation, reasoning and problem solving.” Quantitative Reasoning involves the ability to use the elements of mathematics* for the purpose of computing effectively, interpreting and analyzing data, math modeling, and reasoning within abstract and contextual structures to make predictions, judgments and decisions. The ability to employ quantitative reasoning results in what is called Quantitative Literacy, or Numeracy. (By Elements of Mathematics, is meant prerequisite skills (arithmetic and algebra), number sense, symbolic representation, algorithms, spatial reasoning and measurement.)

Student Learning Outcomes: The student will be able to:
   1. Interpret mathematical models such as formulas, graphs, tables, and schematics, and draw inferences from them.
   2. Represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically, and verbally.
   3. Use arithmetical, algebraic, geometric and statistical methods to solve problems.
   4. Estimate and check answers to mathematical problems in order to determine reasonableness, identify alternatives, and select optimal results.
   5. Recognize that mathematical and statistical methods have limits.

Last Updated and Assessed: 2009

Social Sciences:

HWC General Education Goal: To understand cultures, institutions, and patterns of human behavior and the application of the scientific method to their (the student’s) study.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of the general education requirements in Social Science, the student will be able to:
   1. Explain in oral and written form, and through the use of technology, the interdisciplinary approach of the seven social sciences toward investigating society.
   2. Apply the scientific method using relevant research designs.
   3. Formulate questions and evaluate theories, concepts and philosophies about social phenomenon.
   4. Explain and defend one’s own position and arguments about social issues as applied to the personal pursuit of a quality life.

Last Updated and Assessed: 2010