1. **As a faculty member who is teaching a course in the Liberal Education Program, what steps should I take to complete course assessment?**

   - First, look at the assessment schedule to determine the assessment cycle and reporting year for the respective category. Assessment will be conducted throughout the three-year assessment cycles, and instructors are expected to conduct assessment and report assessment data based on the schedule for as long as the class is offered.
   - Second, watch for an announcement from the Liberal Education Program Assessment Liaison (PAL) at the beginning of the category’s reporting year. The message will request your completion of the Course Assessment Plan form. The form, which multiple faculty who teach the same course can complete together or separately, identifies how the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) will be assessed and how the student results will be analyzed.
   - Third, at the end of the reporting year, you will submit the course assessment results for the three-year assessment cycle. Data will be reported on the Course Assessment Results form.
   - Fourth, a collaborative, faculty review will take place during the fall semester following the reporting year. All faculty who teach courses in the category are strongly encouraged to participate in the discussion to determine areas of strength and limitations across courses taught in the category. At this point, the responsibilities of individual faculty members in the category are complete.

2. **What is the assessment schedule for the Liberal Education Program?**

   The assessment schedule is the same three-year cycle that all programs at UMD use. Basically, assessment will occur throughout three-year cycles for all Liberal Education categories, and course reports are submitted during the third year of each cycle.

   The 10 Liberal Education categories have been divided into three groups, and each group is assigned to a different three-year cycle. As a result, reporting for the full program is staggered over a three-year period to meet the campus reporting requirements.

   The implementation of the Liberal Education Program assessment is starting with a transition period in 2015-16 with partial assessment cycles and first reporting years – one cycle/reporting year for each group of categories. Assessment and reporting for all courses that are offered within a group of the respective categories will occur during the initial reporting year. Then, the year following the initial reporting year will be the first year of the full three-year assessment cycle. The grouping of categories, reporting years, and initial assessment cycles are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LE Categories</th>
<th>Assessment Cycle 1 (partial)</th>
<th>Reporting Year 1</th>
<th>Assessment Cycle 2 (full)</th>
<th>Reporting Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The schedule will continue every three years until further notice. Faculty who teach any course approved for inclusion in the Liberal Education Program are expected to conduct assessment during each three-year assessment cycle and provide the related reports during the scheduled reporting year.

3. What are the reporting year requirements?
Faculty will complete two forms: 1) a Course Assessment Plan form in September of the reporting year, and 2) the Course Assessment Results form at the end of the reporting year. A Course Assessment Results Tracking form is available for faculty to track results throughout each assessment cycle. If multiple faculty teach different sections of the same course, faculty can collaborate and submit one form per course or they can submit their own forms. All forms are available on the Liberal Education web site as Google Forms. Faculty are also encouraged to attend category review session(s) in the fall following the reporting year to discuss category results.

The Liberal Education Subcommittee will review the results for the categories and compile a report that will be submitted to Compliance Assist, the web-based program UMD uses to record program assessment information. The Liberal Education Program Assessment Liaison (PAL) will also participate in the campus ‘Annual Program Assessment Liaison Peer Review’ that takes place in November after the category faculty review session.

4. Does assessment have to be done every time the class is taught?
The answer to this question is “it depends.” If you are only administering these assessments to fulfill the requirements for reporting, it depends on whether there are enough students in a section, and if the population of each section will provide results that could be representative of all students taught during a three-year cycle. If, however, the assessments you are using to fulfill the reporting requirements are embedded in the course and serve as assessment of, for, or as learning, then the assessments are administered as essential parts of the course. You may or may not choose to use all sections’ results for reporting. In addition, if you as the instructor will be using the students’ results to inform your own teaching and course development, you may choose to analyze student results as you teach to inform your practice in an on-going cycle. In this situation, your use of the assessments to adjust or modify the course will provide excellent examples of reflective practice that could benefit others as we all work to increase student success.

5. How many students need to be included in assessment?
The use of these assessments should be to work toward maximizing student learning. To provide as reliable information as we can only increases our understanding of what works. Therefore, your sample should provide information that would be considered generalizable (i.e., representative of all students who take the course). In each section of the course you have taught in which assessment is conducted, all students should be assessed and all students’ results included in the data reported to ensure maximum reliability of the results. However, you have the option to exclude verifiable outliers as the purpose of the course analysis is to inform your own practice and efficacy of curriculum. If your sections are small, please consider including a sufficient number of sections so that your results are as generalizable as possible. Anyone may choose to include student results across all three years of the reporting cycle. To use assessment data both for both Liberal Education reporting and for your own teaching performance evaluation requirements you may choose to analyze your student results per section annually, and identify steps you have taken in response to your analysis of student learning to address limitations and extend strong practices.
6. I teach a course that has been approved for two Liberal Education categories. Which assessment cycle do I use? 
Courses may have been approved for a “Knowledge Domain” category and a “Key Topics” category. Faculty will need to follow the schedule provided above, which means that reports could be due for the two categories in different years. However, because the assessment cycles will overlap, assessment may be completed for both categories at the same times.

7. I teach a course that doesn’t report until 2017-18. Can I start conducting assessment now?
Course assessment cannot begin until a set of rubrics has been developed for the category’s Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). The reason for developing rubrics first is that student proficiency for each SLO is specified in the rubrics. Therefore, the content of the rubrics is used to guide the development of assessment for all courses in each category.

Rubrics were developed for the first group of categories in Fall 2015, so course assessment can begin Spring 2016. Rubrics will be developed for the second group of categories in Spring 2016, which means that courses can be assessed beginning Fall 2016. Once rubrics have been developed for the third group of categories, scheduled for 2016-17, then the course assessment activities can be implemented.

8. Do different faculty who teach the same course need to use the same assessment?
The simple answer is “no.” However, using the same assessment across sections of any course provides valuable information to inform modifications to course aspects such as assessment or course delivery. Benefits of common course assessments include increased possibilities for discussion and deliberations that can occur as faculty members work together to create strong measurement, develop adjustments to assessments, and conduct action research that may result as a use and analysis of student results.

The choice to use the same assessments throughout any course should be a choice of the instructors. Consideration of common course assessments, which may include all of the assessments in a course, only end-of-course assessments, or anything in-between these extremes, should always include thinking about delivery platforms (online, face-to-face, hybrid, lab), sizes of sections, and even times, locations and other factors that can make differences in the results obtained.

9. If different faculty who teach the same course use the same assessment, will the faculty be compared to each other for their performance evaluations?
Use of student results as elements for evaluation of faculty is inappropriate and invalid, as the myriad of variables involved cannot isolate the teacher as the cause nor effect. However, instructor reflection, contextualized and individualized, that is informed by the results of student performance using a common metric can provide insight and remarkable opportunities for growth when optimized through professional learning communities and common course development.

10. What are acceptable assessment methods?
Ideally, assessment should be seamless with instruction and provide means by which a conversation occurs between the learners and the teachers. “Acceptable” assessment methods are those that communicate between each student and the teacher and inform both parties as to the level of proficiency attained by the learner toward the goals of instruction. Therefore, “acceptable” methods should measure those levels of proficiency validly. If the goal of instruction is at the level of knowledge, then valid methods could include tests, essays, and constructed responses in many formats. If the goal of instruction is mastery of skills, then valid methods can include observation through many formats and
can include portfolios in many formats. If the goal of instruction is understanding, then valid metrics can include some selected response, extended constructed response, student work that requires the creation of an original product or performance, and personal communication formats such as journals, reflections, or interviews. If the goal of instruction is growth, then the same longitudinal measures used as assessment methods at two or more points in time such as portfolio and journals are examples of valid assessments (these methods require time and reflection between submissions).

11. How many methods should to be used in the assessment of a Liberal Education category that has 4 SLOs?
The number of SLOs in a course does not directly dictate the number of assessments. Instead, the instructor can create assessments that can be utilized for, of, and as instruction that meaningfully contribute to the course. One strong performance assessment could conceivably assess four SLOs very well in a course. Or, four separate assessments could serve the same purpose, depending entirely on the course content, context, delivery format, and teacher preference.

12. Can class discussion be used as an assessment method?
The goal of assessment of student learning outcomes is to be able to ascertain whether each student has attained a level of mastery of the outcome. Class discussions are wonderful opportunities for growth and exchange, often resulting in new and enriched understandings. However, unless each student engages at equal levels in the discussions used as assessment, discussions are not often reliable measures of each student’s level of understanding. There are means by which discussion can be used as reliable measures that involve designated observers and checklists or other tools for recording and rating each student’s responses. However, one of the hallmarks of remarkable class discussions is the spontaneity and generated excitement that incites new ideas and new insights. The instructor, in leading great discussions, must fully concentrate on the generation of thought, and not on documenting student statements. Class discussions are one of the best teaching tools available in universities, but not all teaching translates directly into reliable assessment.

13. Should a course use the same assessment method(s) and related evidence throughout each three-year reporting cycle?
Not necessarily. The results from each time assessment is conducted should be examined to identify aspects within the course for continuous improvement that could be implemented immediately. Assessment changes within a three-year cycle should be documented so that modifications can be reported on the Course Assessment Results form. When completing the Course Assessment Plan form, document the intended assessment methods for the reporting year if the course is being taught in that year or report the most recent assessment methods if the course will not be taught that year.

14. The Course Assessment Plan form requires a description of “evidence student work meets the appropriate proficiency level” for each SLO. What does this mean?
The form should identify the assessments that will, to the best of the faculty member’s knowledge, be employed to measure students’ levels of proficiency toward the Liberal Education category’s SLOs in the course, using the rubrics developed by faculty. Proficiency levels for your course will depend on the content of the course, the level of the course, and the expectations of the faculty member. Faculty members may define levels of proficiency for their students in a rubric, checklist, directions, matrix, or in narrative and translate those course expectations to the category rubrics for reporting. Alternatively, faculty may score students directly on the category rubric. The definitions for the proficiency levels or the category rubrics represent the “evidence” to provide on the Course Assessment Plan forms.
15. What are the results to report?
The results are the percentage of students who meet the specific levels of proficiency (basic and advanced). The formula for a percentage is: $% = \left( \frac{\# \text{ meeting proficiency level}}{\text{total \# assessed}} \right) \times 100$. When assessing student work, use the category rubric and mark each student at the appropriate level of proficiency. Record percentages using the formula provided above. If using the Course Assessment Results Tracking file, enter the percentages in the respective cells along with the number of students assessed. Calculations are already built into the file that will compute the weighted average totals (accounting for different class sizes) if results from multiple sections of a course are tracked together. The weighted average totals are the results to report on the Course Assessment Results form.

16. How long should results be kept?
Keep the results throughout each three-year assessment cycle for reporting purposes. Within each assessment cycle, faculty should also keep a few examples of student work that may be referred to during the category review session. In addition, faculty are encouraged to keep the results reports for a course to compare results over time and to evaluate the effectiveness of continuous improvement efforts.

17. Are there assessment results goals that faculty need to achieve?
Due to the nature of Liberal Education Program assessment that focuses on continuous improvement; no goals have been established for student proficiency. As assessment is implemented, results are likely to vary between SLOs in every course and all students are not likely to achieve 100% proficiency for any SLO in any course. However, as assessment continues over time, results are expected to improve.

18. Are the rubrics for each category's SLOs permanent once they've been developed or will they be changed?
The rubrics have been and will be developed by faculty, just as the SLOs were developed by faculty. Because a primary purpose of assessment is continuous improvement, the rubrics are one aspect of assessment that may be altered over time. Changing any of the rubrics depends upon the input of faculty teaching courses in each category. Faculty are encouraged to attend the category review session(s) in fall for the categories completing reports in the previous academic year to discuss category results and reflect upon the effectiveness of the rubrics.

19. What might happen if instructors do not conduct assessment or submit the Liberal Education forms? Do they risk losing Liberal Education credit for their courses?
The Liberal Education Subcommittee will remind faculty to submit required data during each reporting year and will track courses with Liberal Education standards embedded. The records of faculty compliance will be shared with the Associate Vice Chancellor, who will then share the information with the Deans of each college and with the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) will be reviewing UMD in Spring 2018, and meeting HLC approval is very important to this University. Part of the required actions determined for our campus by the HLC is to demonstrate how we are measuring each program, including the Liberal Education Program, against our campus learning outcomes. At this point, the Liberal Education Subcommittee, which is part of campus governance, will advise the Associate Vice Chancellor as to how to proceed with faculty who do not submit reports to ensure ongoing successful HLC reviews of assessment procedures.
Have a question that isn’t included here? Contact Julia Williams (jwillia1) with course-specific assessment questions and Jennifer Mencl (jmencl) with general Liberal Education Program assessment questions.