In December 2017, we ran two focus groups on two of the Gen Ed learning outcomes: Intercultural Knowledge and Competence and Quantitative Literacy.

These were outcomes that we had recently assessed by examining student work that was voluntarily given to us by faculty teaching Gen Ed courses that had selected those outcomes. We used the AAC&U rubrics to do those assessments.

We started these focus groups because we noticed there was a mismatch between assignments and rubrics – during our assessment of these outcomes we were often selecting “NA” instead of giving ratings on all of the criteria. We held the focus groups so that we could ask the instructors teaching the courses with these outcomes what they thought of the rubric and what kind of assignments would be appropriate.

**QL** –the criteria that go into this outcome are: Interpretation, Representation, Calculation, Application/Analysis, Assumptions, Communication.

One **challenge we are fac**ing that was pointed out in our focus group is that we’re **using one rubric** to score QL assignments coming from departments ranging from Nursing to Philosophy. This is because we don’t require or limit where these learning outcomes are being taught, as you know from reading these applications or submitting them yourselves. Makes it difficult to cover the breadth.

Faculty raised the issue of what it means to “**Calculate**.” From personal experience I know that in my stats class as a senior we were calculating t-tests and ANOVA’s and regressions by hand. There were programs to do this, but our instructor wanted us to know how to do it by hand – knowing where it came from. Now, they all just use the stats programs. So, is calculating, doing actual calculations, or knowing how to use software to do the appropriate calculations.

Faculty also found it **difficult to find one assignment** that meets all of these criteria. They thought these criteria might emerge over a range of courses.

**One quote** was “I believe that at the end of their experience as an undergrad they should be close to mastering this whole thing. But in any given course or assignment it doesn’t seem likely.”

**IKC**

Issues that were raised included:

There are six criteria in the IKC rubric – two each about **Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes**. The participants were confident they could teach and assess the two Knowledge criteria, which are cultural self-awareness and knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks.

The first criteria on Skills is about empathy, and the question was raised as to **whether empathy could be taugh**t and **how we would measure it**.

Faculty also pointed out that the same thing about part of the **second Skill criteria** is Verbal and **Nonverbal Communication**. How do you assess the latter?

And the same question about **Attitudes** (curiosity and openness) could be measured in an assignment, per se.

Some faculty said they thought empathy was happening in their class, but not in an assignment – more in discussions and the ways students changed the way they interact with each other throughout the semester.

This group, like the QL group, thought these criteria were more likely demonstrated across a range of assignments, and very hard to do in just one.

We are going to dive deeper into these transcripts and draw more conclusions, but these were the highlights that jumped out at us – anyone else who was present, feel free to add to the conversation.

We intend to follow these large focus groups up with smaller meetings in Fall 2018 to discuss the mismatch between assignments and the rubric and to brainstorm ways to bring these more in alignment with each other including training faculty on how to design assignments for this rubric and/or to change the rubric. We intend to explore further the issues brought to our attention above.