



Global Learning: Defining, Designing, Demonstrating

By Kevin Hovland



*Association
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About the Author

From 2001 to 2014, Kevin Hovland directed the Shared Futures initiative at the Association of American Colleges and Universities. He was also the program director for AAC&U's annual meeting and executive editor of the periodical *Diversity & Democracy*. In May of 2014, he became senior director, academic programs at NAFSA.

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Introduction

Global learning is a term widely used across higher education, yet higher education faculty, staff, and practitioners do not always agree about what it means. The goal of this publication is to provide a definition and rationale for the term. By exploring how the term and the ideas behind it are evolving, global learning is placed in the context of several important overlapping higher education change efforts. A shared vocabulary of global learning outcomes can help campus practitioners build valuable alliances that extend beyond those offices, departments, and individuals typically assumed to hold primary responsibility for the global mission of an institution. These expanded alliances can include the whole campus and incorporate a wide range of related priorities. To be effective, they must bridge the often deep divides between academic and student affairs, campus and community, and general education and the major.

This publication is organized into three sections corresponding to three important and closely related steps that campus leaders are taking at institutions across the country and around the world:

- **Defining** global learning and a set of associated student learning outcomes or competencies;
- **Designing** educational experiences through which students gain competence and meet those outcomes; and
- **Demonstrating** that those experiences actually help students achieve global learning outcomes, while simultaneously creating projects and assignments that allow students to **demonstrate competencies**—that they can apply the knowledge, skills, and perspectives that signify their development as global learners.

These steps constitute an approach that might be described as 3-D Global Learning—a reference not only to the three Ds described above, but also to the multidimensional maps colleges and universities are creating to guide their global learning efforts. Following the discussion of how institutions are pursuing work related to the steps outlined above, this publication briefly describes the corresponding maps that could emerge for global learning.

Defining Global Learning

Over the last ten to fifteen years, more and more colleges and universities have adopted mission and vision statements that link their degrees to successful preparation for a complex, globally interconnected world. Such language represents both implicit and explicit commitments by institutions that their graduates will have the capability to meet the demands of future economic, social, and civic challenges and opportunities.

As the examples of mission and vision statements suggest, there is no single definition of global learning that applies to all colleges and universities. At some institutions, global language may reflect a political or moral imperative related to the institution's social justice mission. At others, it signals acknowledgment that higher education is operating within a more complex, interdependent, and interconnected world, where an institution's students come from all around the globe and critical academic questions know no borders. At still others, global language highlights new expectations and realities for graduates' work and careers.

Missions and visions evolve within unique institutional contexts. The ways that institutions see themselves in global terms are often determined by how their states and local communities have been shaped by economic transformation, demographic shifts, trade relations, cultural relationships, and other webs of connection.

Though mission statements may suggest consensus within an institution, they are not always the product of well-organized, campus-wide discussions with multiple stakeholders. Different stakeholders across the institution may have different interpretations of the rhetoric arising in the president's or chancellor's office. They need a shared understanding of how this language relates to actual learning goals and all the practices that flow from them in order to translate that into institutional structures and practices. However, institutions do not often succeed in meaningfully articulating their learning goals and coordinating their designs of global educational experiences without first creating a common definition of *global learning* and establishing a shared responsibility for its development.

Examples of Mission and Vision Statements

Our curriculum will emphasize a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences while it provides the knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences needed in a global society experiencing accelerated technological, social, and environmental change.

*California State University–San Marcos
Vision Statement*

As one of America's most highly respected Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Delaware State University will be renowned for a standard of academic excellence that prepares our graduates to become the first choice of employers in a global market and invigorates the economy and the culture of Delaware and the Mid-Atlantic Region.

Delaware State University Vision Statement

Otterbein is an inclusive community dedicated to educating the whole person in the context of humane values. Our mission is to prepare graduates to think deeply and broadly, to engage locally and globally, and to advance their professions and communities.

Otterbein University Mission Statement

John Carroll University will graduate individuals of intellect and character who lead and serve by engaging the world around them and around the globe.

John Carroll University Vision Statement

With commitment to the values of access, opportunity, student success, and excellence, the mission of Northern Virginia Community College is to deliver world-class, in-person and online, postsecondary teaching, learning, and workforce development to ensure our region and the Commonwealth of Virginia have an educated population and globally competitive workforce.

*Northern Virginia Community
College Mission Statement*

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What kinds of questions can be used to frame such conversations? To begin, institutional stakeholders can examine the language they are using to describe their efforts—whether global, international, or something else. These adjectives are used to modify many concepts—sometimes synonymously and often not. Stakeholders can also explore a series of related questions. How is our institution a global institution? What is global knowledge? How do we improve international education? What is global citizenship—for individuals and for institutions? How might more international exchange lead to different approaches to global questions? (See Defining Global Learning: Questions for Discussion, at the end of this section.)

All of these questions—and more—fall under the umbrella of *comprehensive internationalization*, which has been broadly adapted by others as an approach to addressing the pervasive impact of global change on institutional identity and practice. Hudzik and McCarthy (2012) define comprehensive internationalization as

... a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility.

Comprehensive internationalization not only impacts all of campus life but the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. The global reconfiguration of economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalization and the motivations and purposes driving it.

In an important internationalization index survey, Madeleine Green (2005, ii) examined the following six dimensions of comprehensive internationalization: articulated commitment, academic offerings, organizational infrastructure, external funding, institutional investment in faculty, and international students and student programs.

While many important efforts are guided by such a framework, it should be noted that global learning is *not* necessarily the same as internationalization of the curriculum. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) began using the term global learning to signal a narrow focus on what students are actually expected to learn through curricular and cocurricular educational experiences. The term global rather than international was to signal greater attention to the locational, cultural, and political fluidity characterizing real-world challenges and opportunities.

The differences between global learning, as AAC&U defines it, and an internationalized curriculum are reflected in the questions related to student learning that Green (2005) asked of institutions in the internationalization survey. The academic offerings category survey questions show what continue as common international priorities and assumptions.

- Does your institution have a foreign language admissions requirement for incoming undergraduates?
- Does your institution have a foreign language graduation requirement for undergraduates?
- To satisfy their general education requirement, are undergraduates required to take courses that primarily feature perspectives, issues, or events from specific countries or areas outside the United States?
- At your institution, what percentage of undergraduate courses offered by the following departments had an international focus? (Business, history, political science)
- Did your institution administer for credit any of the following undergraduate programs last year? Study abroad, international internships, international service opportunities, field study)
- How many undergraduate students at your institution studied abroad last year? (Green 2005, 6)

These questions illustrate that higher education has traditionally measured its success in internationalization primarily by evaluating institutional resources and offerings, not student learning (Hovland 2014). However, it is possible to imagine the assumptions embedded in this list about what an international learner can do. An *international learner* can speak at least two languages, is able to live comfort-

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ably in an unfamiliar culture, and has mastered some of the knowledge and skills needed to participate in a profession-like business or diplomacy that is traditionally understood as having international components.

This imagined profile of an international learner is not nearly as expansive as the profile one might infer from today's institutional mission statements. By focusing on what global learners can do rather than on what opportunities they have, how then can the gap be closed? Rather than assuming that participation in certain educational activities automatically results in global learning, how can you develop tools to measure that learning when it is demonstrated by student work?

By raising questions like these that focus on student learning and students as learners, more and more institutions have begun conversations that significantly broaden what counts as global learning. Such questions are also at the heart of a wave of efforts to make explicit and to measure all of the outcomes of liberal education and, more generally, college

degrees. Efforts to define global learning can only benefit from cross-fertilization with national conversations about outcomes and quality.

While individual institutions do establish their own versions of students' global learning outcomes, AAC&U has suggested general categories of student learning outcomes through the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative. (See the sidebar, LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes.)

While the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes show very little explicit attention to global learning, they are consistent with national calls for innovative curricular and cocurricular designs to advance such learning. Pulling together the descriptive phrases from each category provides a reasonable definition of global learning:

Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world...focused by engagement with big questions; intellectual and

LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes

Beginning in school and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies, students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by gaining:

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

Intellectual and Practical Skills, Including

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

Personal and Social Responsibility, Including

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Integrative and Applied Learning, Including

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

(Association of American Colleges and Universities 2013, 2)

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practical skills...practiced across the curriculum; personal and social responsibility... anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges; [and] integrative and applied learning...demonstrated in new settings and in the context of complex problems.

During campus-wide conversations about global learning, the institutional community could build a global learner profile illustrating the characteristics (in terms of knowledge, skills, and actions) they want all students to develop. The AAC&U Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Rubrics were developed through such conversations and serve as a collection of assessment tools (rubrics) linked to liberal education essential learning outcomes.

In addition to offering a means of assessment, however, the rubrics present an opportunity for robust definitional conversations, which will occur out of necessity as institutional teams adapt or create rubrics.

As Merilee Griffin (2010, 10) explains

A rubric is the record of negotiated compromises, the lingering detritus of struggles for dominance by purists and poets and pragmatists. In these contests, some win and some lose. No one gets everything they want and everybody gets a little something. The rubric is the final scorecard. . . .

The rubric is a product of many minds working collaboratively to create new knowledge. It will, almost by definition, be more thoughtful, valid, unbiased, and useful than any one of us could have conceived working in isolation. . . .

Ultimately, our rubric is the very best of our collective professional and intellectual selves at this little point in time, in our small spot on the planet. It is the finest description of what we think is important for our students, right now, in the service of their learning.

As part of the AAC&U Shared Futures: Global Learning and Social Responsibility initiative on learning in undergraduate education, dozens of individuals participated in cross-institutional conversations to create and refine a Global

Learning Rubric. Participants defined global learning as

. . . a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability. Through global learning, students should (1) become informed, open-minded, and responsible people who are attentive to diversity across the spectrum of differences, (2) seek to understand how their actions affect both local and global communities, and (3) address the world's most pressing and enduring issues collaboratively and equitably. (Association of American Colleges and Universities 2014; this can be viewed online and downloaded free of charge, <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/globallearning.cfm>)

In articulating the learning outcomes linked to this vision of global learning, the rubric suggests a developmental arc defined in relation to a set of domains: global self-awareness, perspective taking; cultural diversity; personal and social responsibility; understanding global systems; and applying knowledge to contemporary global contexts. As suggested elsewhere (Hovland 2014), just as Green's 2005 internationalization index survey suggests what an international learner can do, the Global Learning Rubric suggests what a *global learner* can do. For example:

- A global learner articulates their own values in the context of personal identities and recognizes diverse and potentially conflicting positions vis-à-vis complex social and civic problems.
- A global learner gains and applies deep knowledge of the differential effects of human organizations and actions on global systems.
- A global learner understands the interactions of multiple worldviews, experiences, histories, and power structures on an issue or set of issues.
- A global learner initiates meaningful interaction with people from other cultures in the context of a complex problem or opportunity.
- A global learner takes informed and responsible action to address ethical, social, and environmental challenges.

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- A global learner applies knowledge and skills gained through general education, the major, and cocurricular experiences to address complex, contemporary global issues. (Hovland 2014)

Understandably, members of a campus community will have different visions of what a global learner should be able to do. Those visions will reflect varied professional priorities and roles,

diverse and overlapping identities, and disparate backgrounds and experiences. By focusing on students' capacities instead of the institution's programs, departments, courses, and trips, however, it is possible to begin a more inclusive and generative conversation about how better to match the values expressed in the mission statement with the expectations of faculty, student affairs professionals, and students.



DEFINING GLOBAL LEARNING: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Teams of faculty and institutional leaders should participate in robust discussions about what global learning means at their institutions. When engaging in these discussions, stakeholders should consider the following questions.

- While each institution needs to develop a definition of global learning to fit its own history and strategic vision, it is useful to see how other institutions are defining global learning. How are other institutions defining global learning, and what can you learn from their practices?
- Stakeholders on each campus need to address the appropriate role of study abroad, language study, and international exchange within their emerging visions of global learning. What role do these elements play in your institution's vision?
- As is evident from the Global Learning Rubric, there are clear connections between global learning, civic engagement, diversity, and democracy. How do these ideas intersect differently within different campus contexts?
- The idea of global citizenship is often expressed in mission and vision statements. What might global citizenship mean in different contexts, for individuals and for institutions?
- A broadening understanding of global learning parallels a wider set of expectations for all students. How do you distinguish between foundational global learning outcomes that occur in general education and global learning outcomes that occur in discipline-specific contexts?

Designing for Global Learning

Once stakeholders have clearly defined the profile of a global learner, they can begin designing educational experiences—curricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular—through which students can acquire the knowledge and practice the skills they need to participate in twenty-first century life.

As the Global Learning Rubric suggests, it is unrealistic to think that students can grasp the wide range of outcomes associated with global learning in a single course or through a single learning experience. Thus institutions will need to map the global learning outcomes across their curricula, whether they offer two-year associate's degrees or four-year bachelor's degrees.

The goal of such mapping is to create intentional and coherent learning pathways. The challenge in this task is not only to add “global content” to individual courses, but to rethink the global questions of a wide range of disciplines and programs. Ultimately, institutions can rethink how the curriculum and the cocurriculum work together as a whole to help all students achieve the prioritized outcomes. Such a comprehensive approach to global learning raises questions about disciplinary and interdisciplinary work as well as the relationship between general education and the major, academic affairs and student affairs, classroom work and experiential learning.

As with conversations about the definition of global learning, conversations about designing learning experiences can be connected to broader ones about liberal education and the meaning of undergraduate degrees. For example, the AAC&U LEAP Design Principles (www.aacu.org/compass/LEAPDesignPrinciples.cfm) suggest strategies for shaping a significant portion of the undergraduate experience—principles that can help guide curricular or cocurricular designs for global learning in general education, in the major, and in the overall learning environment.

- A) **Learning outcomes** work to guide curriculum as well as pedagogical and assessment decisions.
- B) **Sequential progression from first to final undergraduate years** is keyed to expected student

capabilities rather than specified course content.

- C) **Engaged learning practices** or “high-impact practices” have proven benefits for college students and are woven into the curriculum.
- D) **Intellectual and practical skills in general education and majors** are clearly linked together starting when students enter the program.
- E) **Civic, diversity, and global emphases in general education and majors** share complementary emphases appropriate to the field and provide multiple opportunities for students to advance their learning and engagement.
- F) **Science as science is done** allows students to connect their science studies both in general education courses and in majors, emphasizing science as a continuing process of investigation, analysis, and collaboration.
- G) **Advanced cross-disciplinary inquiry** focuses on “big questions” in the junior and senior year across disciplines and courses, with faculty.

Within this framework, experiential elements of learning gain comparative importance. Consequently, developing a shared vocabulary to describe learning outcomes becomes critical, as does sharing responsibility for global learning across academic *and* student affairs, where many opportunities for experiential learning occur.

Efforts by the Lumina Foundation to develop a Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) similarly move institutions toward integrative designs that focus less on course descriptions and more on student competencies or proficiencies at each degree level—associate's, bachelor's, and master's.

The DQP proficiencies for civic and global learning can be aligned with both the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes and the vision of the global learner derived from the Global Learning Rubric above. In the DQP 2.0 (Adelman et al. 2014), at the undergraduate level, the student:

- Explains diverse positions and evaluates the issue in light of both those interests and evidence drawn from journalism and scholarship.

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- Develops and justifies a position on a public issue and relates this to alternate views with the community/policy environment.
- Collaborates with others in developing and implementing an approach, evaluates the strengths and weakness, and, where applicable, describes the result.
- Identifies a significant issue affecting at least two countries or continents, presents evidence of that challenge, and evaluates the activities of either nongovernmental organizations or cooperative intergovernmental initiatives in addressing that issue.

This kind of framing of civic and global learning is well-suited to backward design, where stakeholders first develop desired learning outcomes and then create learning experiences aimed at producing those outcomes. Participants in the backward design process might ask, “If all holders of undergraduate degrees should be able to successfully demonstrate the cross-cutting capacities described by the DQP’s four criteria, where can students

practice the foundational skills and gain the knowledge they need to do so?” Can they gain such practice and knowledge in courses or in study abroad experiences? Do students experience intentionally designed curricular and cocurricular pathways that lead them, fully prepared, to completion of projects? Or do they acquire knowledge and skills “just in time” to address pressing questions?

In addition to providing a useful way of thinking about global learning and its relationship to liberal learning goals, a framework like the DQP requires revisiting critical questions about what precisely makes learning global. While the problem-centered approach is clear throughout the framework, the only explicitly global requirement is that students’ learning be applied to an issue “affecting at least two countries or continents.” Is it geography that makes an issue global—and thereby makes an experience global learning? Or is it the broader set of critical knowledge and skills related to perspective taking that makes learning global—wherever it may take place? What are the design implications of such questions?



DESIGNING GLOBAL LEARNING: ITEMS TO CONSIDER

Robust conversations about global learning outcomes need to be followed by robust conversations about translating outcomes into curricular design and pedagogical practice. Stakeholders participating in these conversations might benefit from considering the following questions.

- It is a common habit to think of global learning as occurring elsewhere. What kinds of designs emphasize the local in the global and the global in the local?
- Similarly, some programs and disciplines have a long tradition of “owning” the global curricular and cocurricular space. How do innovative designs help challenge the notion that certain programs and/or disciplines “own” global learning, while others are simply along for the ride?
- Global learning (at least as expressed in the Global Learning Rubric) is made up of complex, overlapping, and sometimes messy learning outcomes. How do innovative designs use such complexity and cross-discipline backgrounds to the best advantage?
- As conversations shift from focusing on curricular elements (courses) to curricular coherence (pathways) to learning outcomes (competencies and proficiencies), how do institutions design learning experiences—wherever they occur, whoever is leading them—that blend these traditional elements?

Demonstrating Global Learning

Curricular and experiential learning designs are ultimately judged by evidence that students are performing well in the agreed upon outcome areas. Global learning is characterized within a comprehensive internationalization framework by its strict focus on student learning outcomes and its search for direct assessments—those made using students’ own work—demonstrating that these learning goals are being met. For example, while a goal for campus internationalization could be to increase the number of students studying abroad, a goal for global learning could be to align study abroad experiences with expected learning outcomes and provide opportunities for participating students to demonstrate what they can do as a result of these experiences.

The first two sections of this publication explain that ideas for how students can demonstrate their developing capacities as global learners are already embedded both in efforts to define global learning and in strategies to design high-quality global educational experiences.

While the Global Learning Rubric and the Degree Qualifications Profile are useful tools for defining student learning outcomes, they are primarily driven by strong pressures on higher education to assess learning. The tools also share a commitment to assessing the student learning not through self-reported gains or standardized testing, but rather through evaluation of actual student work. Tools like the Global Learning Rubric are most valuable when used to evaluate artifacts of students’ learning created through well-constructed assignments. As national efforts continue to probe the value of shifting attention and resources away from the credit hour and toward student competency as an indicator of student learning, such tools will continue to grow in importance. It is unclear whether this will encourage a similar shift in focus from the practices associated with global learning (courses, resources, extracurricular programs) to the outcomes associated with global learners (capacities and proficiencies).

In rethinking what global learners can do, stakeholders need to distinguish between two distinct but connected goals: that of building global expertise in a specific area; and that of instilling a more

general level of global understanding that allows individuals to thrive in, and contribute to, an interconnected world. These goals are not mutually exclusive, but they are also not equivalent (Hovland 2014). Students should have appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their learning related to both of these goals.



DEMONSTRATING GLOBAL LEARNING: AREAS OF INQUIRY

When identifying ways for students to demonstrate that they are achieving global learning outcomes—and, concurrently, for the institution to demonstrate that students are doing so—it is important to keep a developmental arc, such as the one outlined by the Global Learning Rubric, in mind. The following questions can help stakeholders focus on students’ development in relation to global learning outcomes.

- The Global Learning Rubric describes a global learner starting from a benchmark (novice) level through two milestone levels to a capstone level. What kinds of assignments and projects are appropriate at each of those levels?
- How do those assignments overlap across the Global Learning Rubric’s six domains (global self-awareness; perspective taking; cultural diversity; personal and social responsibility; understanding global systems; and applying knowledge to contemporary global contexts)?
- What distinguishes assignments developed for general education experiences from those designed for the disciplines and specialized programs? How do the latter build upon general foundations to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their growing expertise?

Mapping Global Learning

If the “3-D global learning” previously described involves a multidimensional approach to defining, designing, and demonstrating global learning, it also suggests multidimensionality in another sense—one that challenges old models of thinking about the global curriculum. Indeed, our efforts to develop and organize the kinds of assignments through which students demonstrate their capacities as global learners may require you to reimagine the maps that you typically use as metaphors for global learning.

In the traditional approach to mapping global learning, there are campus maps that show students where a wide variety of global activities might be found. There are institutional maps that reflect various international connections and memoranda of understanding with partners in other countries. But there are not typically maps that focus on where global learning is happening within a student’s own intellectual geography.

What would such a map look like? As described elsewhere (Hovland 2014), an appropriate metaphor for this map might be a functional magnetic resonance image. With this metaphor in mind, can you imagine different areas of students’ brains “lighting up” as they engage in different educa-

tional experiences connected to global learning? Could you correlate these areas with particular assignments, and if so, what would happen when several such assignments overlapped? How would connections between different parts of the brain grow and change over time? How could you make this learning visible to students themselves?

Extending the mapping metaphor even further, what would global learning maps look like if they charted these changes in students themselves against the global learning opportunities and experiences that students encounter across the curriculum and cocurriculum, over time? Where—across campuses and within particular learning experiences—would you see peaks of student growth or areas inviting further institutional development?

Such multidimensional maps—constructed using tools like the Global Learning Rubric or e-portfolios in which the students gather, integrate, and reflect upon their own experiences as global learners—might help campuses visualize their work to build global learning into every student’s college experience. With the goal of creating such maps in mind, stakeholders may be able to begin defining, designing, and demonstrating students’ global learning in college.

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