

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT, 2018-2019

PROGRAM: Liberal Studies (B.A.)

SUBMITTED BY: Leigh Johnson(current chairperson) and Robert Otten (chairperson 2016-2019)

DATE: 9/2019

Executive Summary: Description of Assessment Process

List *all* of the program’s learning outcomes, as of the assessment year’s catalog: (regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year (Y=Yes)	Year of Next Planned Assessment
Demonstrate appropriate levels of knowledge of content from two disciplines	2017		2019
apply and integrate methods from different disciplines in research and analysis that examine an issue from multiple perspectives, effectively incorporating and synthesizing information from two different disciplines	2016	Yes	2021
find, use, and evaluate a variety of sources of information and demonstrate competence in a documentation style appropriate to their discipline	2018		2020
produce a well-structured and well-written argumentative essay of substantial length that supports students' claims, evaluates opposing and/or alternate viewpoints, and reaches a conclusion logically arising from the discussion	2017		2019
communicate ideas clearly in an oral presentation, defending conclusions effectively and responding extempore to questions and critiques		Yes	2012
demonstrate an understanding of the value of lifelong learning by articulating how educational experiences relate to careers and daily life.	2018		2020

Provide a **brief** description of the assessment process used including how results are shared and discussed and strengths, challenges, and planned improvements to the **process**, providing evidence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment. If there is something that is impeding your ability to implement improvements, please comment on those issues (generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points):

Closing the Loop: Progress on Planned Improvements from Prior Year

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
Find, use, and evaluate a variety of sources of information and demonstrate competence in a documentation style appropriate to their discipline.	The assignments in LS300 and LS420 regarding research conventions in their disciplines and in review of student’s own previous research work will be revised to include specific attention to the critical analysis of sources. At least one assignment should be designed to practice critical analysis. To assess the impact of coordinating LS300 and LS420 portfolios, the portfolios of all students in both classes will be collected and evaluated for common	<p>In 2018-2019, the chairperson was the instructor for both LS300 a (section each in Fall and Spring) and LS420 (a section in Spring).</p> <p>In all sections there was one assignment created addressing the issue of the critical analysis of research conventions in the disciplines studied in the student concentrations.</p>

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
	<p>exercises, expectations, and rubrics regarding documentation.</p> <p>The issue of how academic research skills and expectations translate into activities in the workplace will be addressed in a revision of at least 2 LS400 internship assignments out of 8. Normally these assignments are posted in Canvas and receive peer feedback asynchronously. For critical analysis issues, perhaps the feedback should be given synchronously which would allow for multiple reinforcements of the idea that critical analysis is important. Most students do their internship before LS420 or in the same semester as LS420 so that the additional activity should impact student performance on the thesis.</p> <p>Revise the language in this learning outcome as was suggested in the 2016 rubric from the University Assessment Committee.</p>	<p>The portfolio of students in all three sections have been retained for future assessment.</p> <p>Two assignments in LS400 for sections meeting in Fall and Spring were designed.</p> <p>The language was not updated for the 2019-2020 catalog. It should be updated for catalog 2020-2021.</p>
<p>Demonstrate an understanding of the value of lifelong learning by articulating how educational experiences relate to careers and daily life.</p>	<p>Re-evaluate the senior seminar thesis rubric to improve its value in evaluating all program outcomes.</p> <p>To add another direct measure of this outcome. revise the prompt for the internship self-evaluation in LS400 so that students address the learning outcome as one topic in their report.</p>	

Provide a response to last year’s University Assessment Committee review of the program’s learning assessment report:

- Comment: 1) Outcome #1 (Demonstrate appropriate levels of knowledge of content from two disciplines) is multi-barreled.
 2) Need for an additional direct measure using student responses through a focus group.

Response: 1) The structure of the Liberal Studies degree is that students identify two areas of concentrations which combine to form the content of the major. The amount of study required in each concentration is 18 credits, 6 courses, which represents the equivalent of a minor in each concentration. Some concentrations are filled with course work in one academic discipline so that a student takes 18 credits in Sociology, for example, attains significant study in that field and a level of expertise. The same student might have a concentration in Humanities which could be fulfilled with course work in History, Literature and Philosophy; but these three disciplines, although they have similarities, also select and pursue objects of study with significant difference. In addition, Liberal Studies students often have different concentrations; for example, in last year’s senior seminar 17 represented different concentrations. How to evaluate student performance in so many different fields—and in any given year the variety of concentrations represented is unpredictable—is obviously complicated. The retiring chairperson has no suggestion for responding to the Committee’s point.

Response: 2) The program will begin using a student focus group in 2019-2020.

Outcomes Assessment 2018-2019

Learning Outcome 1: apply and integrate methods from different disciplines in research and analysis that examine an issue from multiple perspectives, effectively incorporating and synthesizing information from two different disciplines

<p>Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p>Performance Standard <i>Define the acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p>Data Collection <i>Discuss the process for collecting this data: who conducted the assessment, when, and how?</i></p>	<p>Result <i>Did you meet your target? What was the result?</i></p>
<p>Direct measure: Senior Thesis Rubric for “Scholarship”</p>	<p>60% of students will be evaluated at the “Excellent” or “Very Good” level. This level indicates that more than half of seniors would be performing at an above-average level in an important transferable skill.</p>	<p>The assessment was conducted through an evaluation of the 11 students who completed a senior thesis in 2018-2019. After the end of the Spring semester, the essays were read by two evaluators using the thesis evaluation rubric. The readers read the essays anonymously and worked separately. Then their scores were compiled. Both evaluators were individuals who have taught Liberal Studies courses.</p>	<p>The rubric identifies 5 aspects of Scholarship to be evaluated. 68% met the expectation in terms of using sources from both concentrations. 53% met the expectation of sufficient & equal sources from both concentrations. 32% met the expectation of quality of sources. 32% met the expectation of critical analysis of sources. 41% met the expectation of balancing primary and secondary sources. Overall 53% of the scores in the category of Scholarship received scores of “Excellent” or “Very Good”. The standard is not met.</p>
<p>Indirect Measure—Graduating Student Survey Spring 2019 for AS UG Liberal Studies</p>	<p>70% of students will evaluate their preparation for Scholarship related skills as “good” or “excellent”</p>	<p>In early August, the Liberal studies Chairperson reviewed the Graduating Student Survey Spring 2019 to identify student responses related to the topics of “Scholarship” in the Senior thesis.</p>	<p>The following items from the Survey related to student “Evaluation of Preparation” were noted. The percentage expressing confidence that their preparation had been “good” or “excellent” were: 58.3 Conduct research to support a position 75% to develop a coherent written argument 66.7% to use quantitative/qualitative techniques within your professional field 83.3% to find appropriate sources of information 83.3% to evaluate the quality of information. Overall, 73.3% of the responses indicated an evaluation of “Good or Excellent” The standard is met.</p>

Interpretation of Results

Analysis and Implications: *What does this result tell you about the extent to which your students achieved this outcome? What are the strengths and weaknesses that this result highlights, and what are the implications for your curriculum or your program?*

The first obvious question to ask is, “Is the expectation too high?” The seemingly obvious answer is “no” because the 60% mark seem reasonable, neither unrealistic demanding nor too low. Perhaps the most influential factor is setting this goal is the limited time that students are actually pursuing the major. Almost half spend no more than one year pursuing this degree, and none more than two years unless they are part-time students.

Another question to ask is, “Is there an issue with evaluator’s lack of expertise in some concentration areas?” This question deserves more consideration since the evaluator typically has an advanced degree in writing or literary studies. The category of scholarship a particularly problematic given the nature of the curriculum in Liberal Studies (i.e., concentrations can come from a wide variety of fields) and program’s the lack of control over the amount of researched writing as students pursue courses in their concentrations. In 2018, the instructor in Senior Seminar for the first time monitored bibliographies being built by students through RefWorks; in the first attempt the monitoring did not seem to affect student final selection of sources used although it affected sources collected.

A third question to ask is, “Is the gap between the students self-evaluation of skills and the reader’s’ evaluation of the senior theses an expected or unexpected gap difference?”

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

For 2019-2020, several changes will be implemented. First, whereas currently Seminar students present a sample of research writing in both concentrations, the Seminar instructor will require students to assemble a portfolio of all research writing done in the concentrations.

Second, the chairperson of Liberal Studies should consider ways that the evaluators might be better prepared to evaluate scholarly sources with which they might be unfamiliar. Another option would be to look for evaluators with more expertise in information literacy.

Third, Liberal Studies advisors should become attentive the research requirements in courses that students elect for their concentrations. Students should be encouraged to take courses in the concentration that include exposure to major research resources in the concentration.

Learning Outcome 2: communicate ideas clearly in an oral presentation, defending conclusions effectively and responding extempore to questions and critiques

<p>Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p>Performance Standard <i>Define the acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p>Data Collection <i>Discuss the process for collecting this data: who conducted the assessment, when, and how?</i></p>	<p>Result <i>Did you meet your target? What was the result?</i></p>
<p>Direct measure: oral and visual presentation about senior thesis to the seminar class evaluated by instructor</p>	<p>60% of students will be evaluated at the “Excellent” or “Very Good” level. This level indicates that more than half of seniors would be performing at an above-average level in an important transferable skill</p>	<p>A description of the oral and visual presentation about the senior thesis was developed and a rubric was created. During the presentation, the instructor scored each presentation according to the rubric. Two weeks later another instructor scored the</p>	<p>The rubric identified 4 aspects of the presentation to be evaluated. 18% met the expectation for the organization of content. 9% met the expectation for slideshow design. 27% met the expectation for thesis clarity. 54% met the expectation for providing supporting information.</p>

Outcome Measures <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	Performance Standard <i>Define the acceptable level of student performance.</i>	Data Collection <i>Discuss the process for collecting this data: who conducted the assessment, when, and how?</i>	Result <i>Did you meet your target? What was the result?</i>
		presentations—omitting a score for oral delivery—based on viewing the powerpoints. Both instructors have taught the Liberal Studies senior seminar in the past.	Note: because one evaluator could not attend the presentations
Indirect Measure—Graduating Student Survey Spring 2019 for AS UG Liberal Studies	70% of students will evaluate their preparation for oral and visual presentation skills as “good” or “excellent”	In early August, the Liberal studies Chairperson reviewed the Graduating Student Survey Spring 2019 to identify student responses related to the topics of “Scholarship” in the Senior thesis.	The following items from the Survey related to student “Evaluation of Preparation” were noted. The percentage expressing confidence that their preparation had been “good” or “excellent” were: 75% Deliver a coherent oral presentation 75% use technology effectively in a workplace environment 83% apply knowledge and skills to a new situation. The standard is met.

Interpretation of Results

Analysis and Implications: *What does this result tell you about the extent to which your students achieved this outcome? What are the strengths and weaknesses that this result highlights, and what are the implications for your curriculum or your program?*

That the standard was not met according to the direct measure is disappointing. The presentation of the senior thesis is prepared for in the course. During senior seminar students make two oral/visual presentations: one presentation concerns identifying a scholarly article in each concentration and explaining to the class what makes it scholarly; the second presentation concerns a presentation of the senior thesis proposal. These presentations were shorter than the senior thesis presentation and involved only two or three slides. In addition, the instructions for the senior thesis and the rubric were reviewed in advance. Students all seemed familiar with the task of creating an oral/visual presentation although we have no data regarding the number or frequency of prior presentations. We do know that students in LS300 create a similar presentation for the end of the semester.

Because students in Liberal Studies may choose a wide variety of courses to meet the requirements in the concentrations, the level of experience in various academic exercises (presentations, research papers, group assignments, etc.) is not shaped by “major” courses as happens in more traditional majors.

It is not surprising that the lowest scores occurred in “Slideshow Design” since this aspect has not been a subject of discussion or practice either in LS300 or LS420. Nor is it surprising that the highest scores occurred in “Supporting Information” since students were working from their completed senior thesis.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

First, in the next Senior Seminar, the presentations will be witnessed by both evaluators so that the “Oral Delivery” aspect can be evaluated by both. It would be desirable to have a third evaluator, but the number of faculty teaching Liberal Studies courses in a given year is often one person and occasionally two. The instructor of the seminar will also consider having student attendees complete an evaluation of each presentation.

Second, to improve the value of the indirect measure, questions concerning the student experience with oral/visual presentation should be added to the Liberal Studies Alumni Survey.

Third, the class meeting schedule in Liberal Studies should be adjusted to promote the earlier completion of the written thesis and allow more time to prepare the oral/visual presentation. Another option would be to develop the thesis and the presentation in tandem throughout the semester.

Fourth, Liberal Studies advisor should also counsel students to get experience in oral presentation in their concentration courses just as they will now recommend that students seek courses that offer a significant research experience.

To assist advisors in encouraging students to experience oral/visual and written presentation experiences, the chairperson should begin assembling a database of courses that students in different concentrations take. This database should contain recommendations about courses that are desirable because of the academic exercises students experience. Current advisors probably already have some awareness of student experience in concentration courses; this information should be collected to found the database.

Appendices (please only include items that will help reviewers understand your process – for example, test questions, rubrics, survey questions, more detailed description of assessment measures, summary tables of survey results, etc.)

Senior Presentation Rubric

LS420 Oral Presentation Evaluation

Scale: 5=Excellent 4= Very Good 3=Good 2= Unsatisfactory 1=Missing/Poor

Student	Organization of Content	Slideshow Design	Oral Delivery	Thesis Clarity	Supporting Information

Evaluation Criteria for Senior Thesis:

Your paper will be evaluated according to the following criteria: Critical Thinking, Scholarship, Organization and Style, and Documentation. Possible grades are as follows: Excellent (E), Very Good (VG), Good (G), Unsatisfactory (U), and Failing (F).

	E	VG	G	U	F
1. Critical Thinking					
• Topic Choice					
a. is suitable for scholarly research					
b. treats a controversial or debated topic.					
• Topic Analysis					
a. Appeals to current interest					
b. integrates two concentrations					
c. generates arguable claims					
d. provides new information					
• Claim Analysis					
a. is substantial; presents facts, definitions, values, & policies					
b. considers and evaluates objectively opposing and/or multiple viewpoints					
• Thought and Judgment					
a. display mature thinking					
b. present an independent point of view					
2. Scholarship					
a. from both concentrations is used					
b. is sufficient & equal in both concentrations					
c. is evident in the quality of sources (e.g., bibliographies, scholarly journals,					

indexes, databases, professional publications, bibliographical resources)					
d. is shown by a critical analysis of sources (e.g., timeliness, stability, bias, reputation, relevance)					
e. balances primary and secondary sources (if applicable)					
3. Organization and Style					
a. Paper is well-organized and tightly structured					
b. Paragraphs are fully developed					
c. Argument is fully articulated and convincing					
d. Paper comes to a reasoned conclusion					
e. Thesis meets length expectations					
4. Format and Documentation					
a. reflect an appropriate and recognized documentation style					
b. reflect an appropriate and recognized style for internal documentation					
c. includes Works Cited or Reference page(s) correctly done					
d. shows effective integration of source material into text					
e. avoid plagiarism traps					