

The Liberal Arts Curriculum Effective AY 2007-08 Assessment Plan and Guide for the Faculty

Prepared by the Assessment Advisory Board

Reviewed and Approved by the Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee

Overview

A. Liberal Arts Program Requirements

Beginning in April 2007 and continuing, CAPC will review all courses to be considered for inclusion in the Liberal Arts Curriculum approved by the faculty in December 2006. Faculty will submit documentation as described below for courses in the Arts, Humanities, Mathematics and Logic, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Ethics, Global Studies, Writing 1 and Writing 2 categories.

B. College-wide Requirements Satisfied Within the Major

CAPC will not review courses that satisfy the Technology or Oral Presentation requirements. For these two areas, departments should determine appropriate educational outcomes that reflect the general outcomes stated below; if these outcomes cannot be adequately met by a required course or courses in the major, the department should seek out and require a relevant course in another department with the assistance of the Registrar, if necessary. The Information Literacy requirement and its outcomes must be satisfied through coursework completed for the major.

The Liberal Arts Curriculum specifies general student learning outcomes for these requirements as follows:

Technology: (1) engage in data searches and data organization, (2) engage in data analysis, and (3) engage in data presentation and communication.

Oral Presentation: (1) employ basic skills of good public speaking, (2) conduct an audience analysis, (3) use logic, and (4) demonstrate credibility through the presentation of evidence and the use of proper delivery techniques, including the use of audio-visual materials and appropriate technologies.

Information Literacy Requirement: (1) frame a research question, (2) access and evaluate sources, (3) evaluate content, (4) use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, and (5) understand the economic, legal & social issues of information use.

Departments must assess the outcomes for these requirements, certifying that students have demonstrated an acceptable level of performance; this may be accomplished through course-embedded assessment, standardized testing or some other assessment method.

For each major, departments must submit to the Provost's Office by May 15 annually a list of the required coursework by which students will satisfy the Technology, Oral Presentation, and Information Literacy requirements. If a department requires its majors to take a course in another department to satisfy the oral presentation or technology requirements, that course should be listed in the College Catalog with other courses required for the major.

Timetable for submission to CAPC

Liberal Arts Program Requirements For LAC designation in schedule:	Submit documentation by
Fall	April 15
Spring	October 15
College-wide requirements satisfied within the major	May 15

Assessment of Liberal Arts Program Requirements

Student learning outcomes for the Liberal Arts Curriculum are contained in the Curriculum document approved by the faculty on December 12, 2006. The success of the Curriculum in meeting these outcomes requires faculty commitment to the following:

1. Careful preparation and timely submission of documentation necessary to qualify courses as explained below.
2. Vigilance in ensuring that the course follows through on promised outcomes.
3. Student assessment methods that measure the outcome(s) specific to that category.
4. Confidence that the final grade of "C" or better demonstrates an acceptable level of academic achievement for the outcome(s) specified in the Assessment paragraph of each category.

Qualifying Courses in the Liberal Arts Curriculum

A. Courses that address areas of scholarly inquiry and human achievement

To qualify a course in any of the five content areas, the department or a faculty member who teaches the course must specify

- 1) *how the learning objectives of the course meet the academic characteristics/criteria associated with that category as described below and*
- 2) *how student performance will be assessed in regard to those objectives*

If common language can be used to explain how the criteria are met for a number of content courses, these courses may be submitted together.

1. Arts (ART)

Key disciplines: Fine Arts, Dance, Theater, Music, Creative Writing, Visual Arts

The courses that comprise this category are designed to help students develop an understanding and appreciation for the fine arts, including the visual and performing arts and creative writing. Creating, performing and appreciating works of art define the basis for an aesthetic education. Studio and/or performance experiences help students to develop creative and critical thinking skills whereas appreciation experiences help students to understand the value systems that have developed over the centuries, underpinning the rationale for determining the great works and their creators. While tools and process may differ, the concepts that define the arts are common to all disciplines in this category.

Assessment: Successful completion of the Arts and Humanities requirements leads to student acquisition of the ability to utilize qualitative reasoning to interpret the aesthetic qualities and social significance of historical and cultural artifacts, including works of art, literature and film.

2. Humanities (HUM)

Key disciplines: Communication, English, History, International Languages, Philosophy

The courses that comprise this category examine the texts produced by human culture in order to understand how these texts have, in the past, reflected and shaped – and continue to reflect and shape – human thought, including human aspirations and fears. The texts studied by humanistic disciplines include literature and film, philosophical and religious treatises, and historical documents. The method of inquiry employed by humanities disciplines requires a textual analysis that arrives at its understanding by considering the text from multiple perspectives, ranging from the study of the text's language and its implications, to a consideration of historical and cultural contexts, to the situation of a text within a tradition of thought.

Assessment: Successful completion of the Arts and Humanities requirements leads to student acquisition of the ability to utilize qualitative reasoning to interpret the aesthetic qualities and social significance of historical and cultural artifacts, including works of art, literature and film.

3. Mathematics and Logic (ML)

Key discipline: Mathematics

The courses that comprise this category are designed to engage students in activities that develop analytical skills relating to the formulation, interpretation and solution of quantitatively-based problems or activities which develop logical reasoning skills, including the ability to analyze and critically evaluate arguments from a logical point of view.

Assessment: Successful completion of the Mathematics and Logic requirement leads to student acquisition of the ability to formulate, interpret and solve problems through the use of quantitative and logical reasoning skills.

4. Natural Sciences (SCI)

Key disciplines: Biology, Chemistry, General Science, Physics

The courses that comprise this category share a common methodology, in that they explore and study the natural world through the application of the scientific method. This method of inquiry involves critical and objective observation, the formulation and testing of hypotheses, and the critical analysis and interpretation of empirical data.

Assessment: Successful completion of the Natural Sciences requirement leads to student acquisition of the ability to utilize scientific reasoning and quantitative approaches to investigate the natural and physical world.

5. Social Sciences (SS)

Key disciplines: Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Religion, Sociology

The courses that comprise this category study human culture and behavior and the institutions within which individuals and groups live, work, learn and act. The mode of inquiry associated with the investigation of the cognitive, political, religious, social, expressive, and economic dimensions of human life is informed by the scientific method, signifying an appreciation of the value and significance of using empirical evidence, hypothesis testing, quantitative analysis and qualitative studies to think critically about the nature of human behavior, institutions and individual development.

Assessment: Successful completion of the Social Sciences requirement leads to student acquisition of the ability to utilize qualitative and/or quantitative approaches to understand social systems and human behavior.

B. Courses that promote reflection on and engagement with the demands of citizenship within a complex and changing society

Separate documentation must be submitted for each course in Ethics or Global Studies.

1. Ethics (ETH)

To qualify a course in Ethics, the department or a faculty member who teaches the course must specify how the course meets each of the following criteria:

- *The course must study traditional Western theories of ethics; it may apply these theories within a particular disciplinary context (e.g., Business, Performing Arts)*

- *The course must include a hands-on, experiential component (time spent outside the classroom engaged in activities that invite students to apply theory to practice)*
- *The course must include an academic opportunity for students to reflect on the experiential component*
- *For administrative purposes, if the experiential component consists of community service, this activity must be coordinated with the Community Service Office, rather than through a department, in order to maintain a structure by which agencies have a relationship with Cedar Crest as an institution, rather than with individual departments*

Assessment: Successful completion of the Ethics requirement leads to student acquisition of the ability to apply the theories and principles of the Western tradition of ethics as a guide to personal conduct and engaged citizenship.

2. Global Studies (GS)

To qualify a course in Global Studies, the department or a faculty member who teaches the course must confirm that a significant portion of the course content (more than 50%) focuses on one or more of the following subjects. In addition, students should be assessed on their ability to utilize methodological skills appropriate for the purpose of engaging in cross-cultural analysis and/or identifying strategies for participation within a global environment.

- *Global politics and international relations, both formal and informal, including the work of international organizations such as the UN and the World Health Organization and international nonprofit organizations such as Doctors Without Borders and Amnesty International*
- *International political economy: study of theories of macro-economics, multinational corporations, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, and transnational trade alliances*
- *Global environmental forces, from the perspective of science (e.g., the effect of global warming upon ecosystems) and/or from the perspective of politics (e.g., international climate agreements)*
- *Health issues critically understood within a global context that address the political, physical, and psychosocial dimensions of health care, including transcultural awareness and models of cultural competence*
- *Legal affairs within a global context*
- *Women's issues considered from a cross-cultural vantage point*
- *Flows of people through immigration, political flight, or tourism and the subsequent interactions with a host population*
- *Transnational flows of cultural images, ideologies, and ideas through various media*
- *Non-Western cultures and literatures, including world philosophies and religions*

- *Culture area courses (e.g., Asia, Africa, Caribbean, European Union) that study local culture within a global context*
- *Historical study of a region outside the U.S. in the context of establishing an understanding of the connections between past and present*
- *International language study at an advanced level as a method to understand diverse cultural and social contexts*

Assessment: Successful completion of the Global Studies requirement leads to student acquisition of the ability to utilize methodological skills appropriate for the purpose of engaging in cross-cultural analysis and/or identifying strategies for participation within a global environment.

C. Courses that promote the ability to use writing as a tool for expression and understanding

1. Writing 1 (WRI1)

As Cedar Crest's first-year composition class, WRI-1 courses introduce students to the ways in which writing is used by the college community, along with the expectations and standards under which their writing is read. As such, WRI-1 courses have student learning outcomes which reflect the six qualities of effective college writing (see the Liberal Arts Curriculum document approved by the faculty 12/12/06).

To qualify a course in Writing 1, the department or a faculty member who teaches the course must certify that, upon completion of the course, a student will be able to:

- *Use critical reading and writing strategies as a way of inquiring, understanding, and thinking about a subject.*
- *Use writing to communicate their own understanding of a subject while integrating and distinguishing their ideas from those of others.*
- *Analyze other writers' arguments by locating and evaluating their claims, the ways in which they support those claims, and how they address counterarguments and alternative points of view.*
- *Focus on a writing task's purpose by clearly articulating an insightful claim (or series of claims) and drawing upon sound reasoning, specific and pertinent evidence, illustrative examples, and relevant authorities to express and develop those ideas.*
- *Draw upon and use a variety of rhetorical forms, genres, and structures as appropriate to the expectations of audience and the demands of a writing task.*
- *Understand that there are differences between academic writing styles in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences (the MLA,*

CSE, and APA, for instance). These differences include citation methods and procedures for incorporating quotation, paraphrase, and summary of source material, but also matters such as organization, style, tone, vocabulary, and format.

- *Utilize research skills and appropriate technologies in effectively addressing a writing assignment to locate, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize both primary and secondary sources.*
- *See that successful writing often takes several drafts, and develop strategies for generating and revising ideas and the language to express them, along with editing and proofreading practices to ensure readability.*
- *Critique their own and others' writing and ideas, as well as understand the collaborative and social contexts in which writing takes place.*
- *Prepare a manuscript of professional quality and format, while controlling readability conventions in spelling, grammar, mechanics, and syntax.*

Additionally, the department or faculty member teaching the course must address the following criteria:

a. The writing process must be taught as part of the course content and embedded in its assignments. This includes a writing-assignment sequence of increasing complexity, prewriting or drafting exercises that enable students to reflect upon and improve their writing in developmental stages, peer or instructor review of drafts via workshops or conferences, and the ability to revise drafts based upon that feedback. Writing is meant to be a learning strategy for course material, not an add-on component to the course.

b. A minimum of 25 pages (approximately 6,250 words) of written material must be submitted by students, of which at least 15 pages represent final text submitted for an instructor's evaluation and assessment. (The remaining number may include formal and informal writing; developmental essays, drafts, and other prewriting assignments; rewrites of papers and journals; newsgroups and online discussions; or essay exams.)

c. The major portion of the evaluation for a student's final grade must be of written products. Assessment should take into account the six qualities of effective college writing, although individual grade judgments will necessarily take into consideration an assignment's difficulty and place in the semester.

d. Course enrollment must be capped at 18 students per section.

e. *Students must satisfy course requirements with a final grade of “C” or higher. A final grade of “C” should indicate that a student has met the minimum level of competency with regard to the class’s writing outcomes.*

Assessment: Successful completion of the Writing 1 requirement leads to student acquisition of the ability to use writing techniques to communicate ideas and information to an audience.

2. Writing 2 (WRI2)

Cedar Crest’s WRI-2 courses are writing-intensive classes from across the curriculum that provide instruction in how a particular academic discipline uses writing and in the processes by which students can become proficient in that writing style. As students move beyond WRI-1, their writing abilities should refine and mature into disciplinary and professional fields.

While the writing outcomes of a particular WRI-2 course depend upon its academic discipline, all WRI-2 classes should address how the six qualities of college writing appear in its field. Furthermore, the method of writing instruction for WRI-2 courses should draw upon the experiences and outcomes of the first-year writing class.

To qualify a course in Writing 2, the department or a faculty member who teaches the course must certify that, upon completion of the course, a student will be able to:

- *Use the writing strategies of a particular discipline as a method for developing their own critical thinking, reading, and writing skills.*
- *Analyze the claims and types of support found in models of scholarly or professional writing within a discipline.*
- *Understand the uses, reader expectations, and conventions for writing within a discipline, including being able to proficiently use an appropriate academic writing style (MLA, CSE, APA, or Chicago, for instance).*
- *Develop an academic voice familiar with the conventions in usage, specialized vocabulary, and manuscript format of a discipline.*
- *Utilize appropriate technologies for research and written communication within a discipline.*
- *Produce a final text through a series of developmental stages connected with the discipline’s writing processes.*

Additionally, the department or faculty member teaching the course must address the following criteria:

a. The writing process must be taught as part of the course content and embedded in its assignments. This includes a writing-assignment sequence of increasing complexity, prewriting or drafting exercises that enable students to reflect upon and improve their writing in developmental stages, peer or instructor review of drafts via workshops or conferences, and the ability to revise drafts based upon that feedback. Writing is meant to be a learning strategy for course material, not an add-on component to the course.

b. A minimum of 25 pages (approximately 6,250 words) of written material must be submitted by students, of which at least 15 pages represent final text submitted for an instructor's evaluation and assessment. (The remaining number may include formal and informal writing; developmental essays, drafts, and other prewriting assignments; rewrites of papers and journals; newsgroups and online discussions; or essay exams.)

c. The major portion of the evaluation for a student's final grade must be of written products. Assessment should take into account the six qualities of effective college writing, although individual grade judgments will necessarily take into consideration an assignment's difficulty and place in the semester.

d. Course enrollment must be capped at 18 students per section.

e. Students must satisfy the writing requirements for the course with a final grade of "C" or higher. A final grade of "C" should indicate that a student has met the minimum level of competency with regard to the class's writing outcomes.

Assessment: Successful completion of the Writing 2 requirement leads to student acquisition of the ability to use writing techniques to communicate ideas and information to an audience.

NOTE: No course may be qualified in more than one of the following categories: Arts, Humanities, Mathematics and Logic, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Ethics, Global Studies. However, a course in one of these areas may also be submitted for WRI-2 designation.

Next Steps in Assessing the LAC

This plan is a foundation for assessing our liberal arts curriculum. It describes the first steps the faculty will take to ensure that our graduates achieve the goals inherent in our mission as a liberal arts college. There are a number of questions that we will need to answer as we continue the ongoing development of this assessment plan:

1. Can additional tools be developed to determine the effectiveness of a course in meeting its LAC learning outcome(s)?
2. How can we document to an external reviewer that we are successful in meeting the goals of the LAC?
3. Our LAC states that “Successful completion of the Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences requirements leads to student acquisition of the ability to distinguish among the Arts, Humanities and Sciences as distinctive areas of scholarly inquiry and intellectual achievement.” When and how will we measure whether students have achieved this goal?

The faculty’s continuing work on assessment will require us to address these and other issues.

Template for Submission of LAC Courses
(to be used for courses in Ethics, Global Studies, Writing 1, Writing 2)

LAC Category (ETH, GS, WRI1, WRI2)): _____

Course being submitted for LAC Qualification:

Explain how the learning objectives of the course meet the academic characteristics/criteria associated with that category as described in the assessment plan (ETH – p. 5, GS – p. 6, WRI1 – p. 7, WRI2 – p. 9)

Describe, in general, student assessment methods that will be used to evaluate student performance in regard to the learning outcomes for the category.
