

# Guidelines for Learning Outcomes for LAC Courses

Basis for Discussion by the Council on 9/6/11

Our assessment procedures require that:

Each Core Curriculum Committee...develop a set of guidelines with respect to how course outcomes must be related [by departments or programs] to the criteria for [the] area(s) [in its jurisdiction] (i.e., which criteria or what percentage of the criteria must have associated course learning outcomes, and which criteria or what percentage of the criteria may be left out of the assessment process).

This has already been done by the Core Curriculum Committee for History, Literature, and the Humanities, which has proposed the following set of guidelines:

*Area 3b (Literature and Humanities):* Course learning outcomes must be developed in relation to:

- Criteria 1, 3, and 5, all of which are such that the achievement of associated learning outcomes could be assessed in the context of grading exams and outside writing assignments.
- Criterion 4, which explicitly calls for one or more outside writing assignments, which means that the achievement of one or more associated learning outcomes can easily be assessed in the context of grading such assignments.

Course learning outcomes needn't be developed in relation to

- Criteria 2 and 6. Criterion 2 will not apply uniformly to all classes and, further, it would be difficult to measure the extent to which students have achieved what it this criterion requires; assignments won't necessarily ask students to do this specifically, even if courses in Area 3b are designed to encourage them to do so. As regards criterion 6, few classes will actually test/evaluate students on what it requires, though some may.

Those criteria may therefore be left out of the assessment process.

*Area 4 (History):* Course learning outcomes must be developed in relation to:

- Criteria 1-5. Criteria 1-4 are all such that the achievement of associated learning outcomes could be assessed in the context of grading exams and writing assignments, and criterion 5, which expressly calls for written work, can easily be assessed through the assignment and grading of such

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The Council needs to do the same thing for the Electives area at the very least, since LAC electives don't fall under the jurisdiction of any of the Core Curriculum Committees. Our criteria for LAC electives read as follows:

## **CONTENT AREA: ELECTIVES**

### **UNC Liberal Arts Core Course Criteria**

#### **UNC Liberal Arts Core Goal**

Elective courses are designed to help students further advance a liberal arts education through the acquisition of general knowledge and development intellectual capacities, but do not meet the specific criteria of Areas of 1-8 or while waiting on gtPathway approval for Areas 1-6.

#### **Criteria for Inclusion in the UNC Liberal Arts Core**

Content of Elective courses shall be designed to:

1 AND 2 AND (3 OR 4 OR 5)

1. further the mission of the Liberal Arts Core at the University of Northern Colorado.\* (Typically elective courses will be courses that provide students with a foundation in interdisciplinary studies that do not fit into Areas 1-8 of the Core);
2. enhance students' competency in critical thinking;
3. enhance students' competency in written communication;
4. enhance students' competency in reading;
5. enhance students' competency in technology.

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#### **\*The mission:**

The mission of the program is to give students a foundation in the liberal arts, enabling them to become responsible well-educated citizens capable of contributing effectively to a rapidly changing, technologically advanced, global society. The program's curriculum is designed to introduce students to undergraduate studies; to foster their competencies in reading, writing, critical thinking, mathematics, and the use of technology; to improve their awareness of the multicultural character of contemporary society; and to give them a sense of connections among the various academic disciplines. Students who complete the program will be prepared to think for themselves, to marshal relevant information, to reason about complex issues, to reflect upon questions of principle, to express themselves effectively, to recognize the importance of the past, to appreciate cultures and values different from their own, to make choices with a sense of their ethical implications, to work towards a better future, and to function with skill and knowledge in an ever-changing world.

\* \* \*

To get our discussion going, I propose the following guidelines for the Electives area:

*Electives:* Course learning outcomes must be developed in relation to:

- Criteria 1 and 2, and, as appropriate, either to criterion 3 or to criterion 4 or to criterion 5 (no course in the Electives area must meet more than one of these). Learning outcomes associated with criterion 1 will need to identify the particular item or items in the last sentence of the mission statement that the course in question is designed to prepare students to do (no particular course must be designed to contribute to the preparation of students to do *all* of these things). Learning outcomes associated with criteria 2-5 could all be assessed in the context of grading exams, outside writing assignments, or other appropriate assignments, and this should also be true of learning outcomes associated with criterion 1.