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**Annual Assessment Report  
Academic Year 2022-2023  
Liberal Studies Program**

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***Executive Summary***

Artifacts relating to three Liberal Studies student learning outcomes were scored by multidisciplinary teams of university faculty during a two-day workshop in June 2023. Those learning outcomes included:

- *Information Literacy*
- *Means of Expression*
- *Awareness of Self*

Results for *Information Literacy*

- 55% of student work in the **Determine Sources** category met or exceeded expectations.
- 48% of student work in the **Evaluate Critically** category met or exceeded expectations.

Results for *Awareness of Self*:

- 74% of student work in the **Knowledge** category met or exceeded expectations.
- 67% of student work in the **Action** category met or exceeded expectations.

Results for *Means of Expression*:

- 87% of student work in the **Language** category met or exceeded expectations.
- 72% of student work in the **Organization/Evidence** category met or exceeded expectations.
- 76% of student work in the **Central Message** category met or exceeded expectations.

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## 1. Rationale for Assessment

WCU's Liberal Studies Program engages in an on-going assessment of student learning within its curriculum. This curriculum consists of approximately 250 courses, and its size means that it touches almost every student experience and almost every department at the university. For that reason, it is important to evaluate the extent to which the Program speaks to its intended content and objectives.

Additionally, the accreditation process requires program assessment, as SACS-COC comprehensive standard 8.2.b states that for general education competencies, the university must “identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of seeking improvement” (SACS-COC, Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation, 2018, p. 70). To that end, this assessment report provides data regarding the extent to which WCU students are demonstrating three of the university’s Liberal Studies student learning outcomes (SLOs) – specifically *Information Literacy, Awareness of Self, and Means of Expression*.

**The Liberal Studies Committee (LSC), in Spring 2022, set a baseline expectation that 80% of all student artifacts should attain a score of either “meets” or “exceeds expectations.** For SLOs that are currently below the 80% benchmark, the LSC set a goal of a 2% increase by the next assessment cycle, with an eventual target of 80% proficiency. If an SLO is already achieving 80% proficiency, no additional incremental increase will be required for the next cycle.

## 2. Background on Assessment Approach

During AY 2022-2023, the LS Program collected student artifacts covering three Liberal Studies student learning outcomes: *Information Literacy, Awareness of Self, and Means of Expression*.

The table below details the three outcomes covered within this report. A full list of outcomes is located on the Liberal Studies Assessment webpage (<https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-enrichment/liberal-studies-program/assessment.aspx>)

<b>Information Literacy</b>	<b>Students will identify appropriate information sources and evaluate critically the credibility of those sources for relevance, legitimacy, and bias.</b>
<b>Awareness of Self</b>	<b>Students will recognize behaviors and define choices that affect their lifelong well-being.</b>
<b>Means of Expression</b>	<b>Students will craft written and/or oral communication demonstrating organization, clarity, logic, and skill for various audiences.</b>

### 3. Assessment Methodology and Timeline

For this cycle of assessment, artifacts from all three outcomes were collected over both the fall and spring semesters. If, however, an instructor submitted artifacts for a particular course during the fall semester, they were not asked to submit artifacts a second time for that same course in the spring.

All faculty teaching LS courses aligned with these three outcomes were notified *at least three weeks before the start of the semester* that their course would be included in assessment. That initial email contained a copy of the LS rubric for the outcome being measured, and faculty members were informed that the rubric would be used for assessment of student assignments (also known as “student artifacts”). That same email asked each faculty member to consider thoughtfully how they might design an assignment for their course that would align appropriately with the applicable rubric.

*Approximately three weeks after the start of each semester*, those same instructors were sent a second email that included specific guidelines for electronic artifact submission (artifacts were to be submitted and stored within the Microsoft Teams environment), and they were reminded about the submission deadline at the end of the semester. As part of this same request, instructors were asked to submit 1) **a copy of their course syllabus**, 2) **instructions for the assignment**, and 3) **an optional note to the assessors explaining how the assignment met the relevant outcome**. The LS Assessment Director sent one additional reminder email approximately one month before the due date and then one week before the due date, and then followed up with all individuals who had not submitted their materials by the deadline.

On June 6-7, 2023, fourteen faculty volunteers, representing a variety of departments and programs throughout the university, attended an online workshop for the purpose of scoring Liberal Studies student artifacts. Each faculty assessor received \$500.00 for their time and effort over the two-day scoring period. At the workshop, faculty were divided into seven teams of two, and each team was given approximately 275 artifacts to score, with the artifacts divided between the three outcomes (*Information Literacy, Awareness of Self, and Means of Expression*).

The type of artifacts varied widely and included student-generated PowerPoints, research papers (of varying lengths), reflection papers, exams/quizzes, and a few audio and/or video files. To address issues of inter-rater reliability, faculty pairs worked together to arrive at a common scoring decision for each artifact, and all scores were entered into a customized spreadsheet. After scoring each set of artifacts from a particular course, the team then answered a series of survey questions in order to provide formative feedback (see Appendix 1 for a copy of these questions).

### 4. Artifact Submission Summary

During this annual assessment period, 130 instructors were asked to submit artifacts, and 128 instructors did so – **a 98% response rate**. This represents a slight improvement over last year’s response rate of 97%.

Ultimately, the LS Program received a total of 4,332 student artifacts from our LS instructors during AY 2022-2023. After random sampling, the seven teams of faculty in our summer workshop scored a collective **1,689 student assignments**, distributed across all three student learning outcomes.

Quantitative assessment results are outlined in the following sections of this report.

## 5. Quantitative Data – Information Literacy

A total of 480 artifacts were scored for *Information Literacy*, representing a random sample of the total artifacts received. These artifacts were submitted by instructors of the following courses:

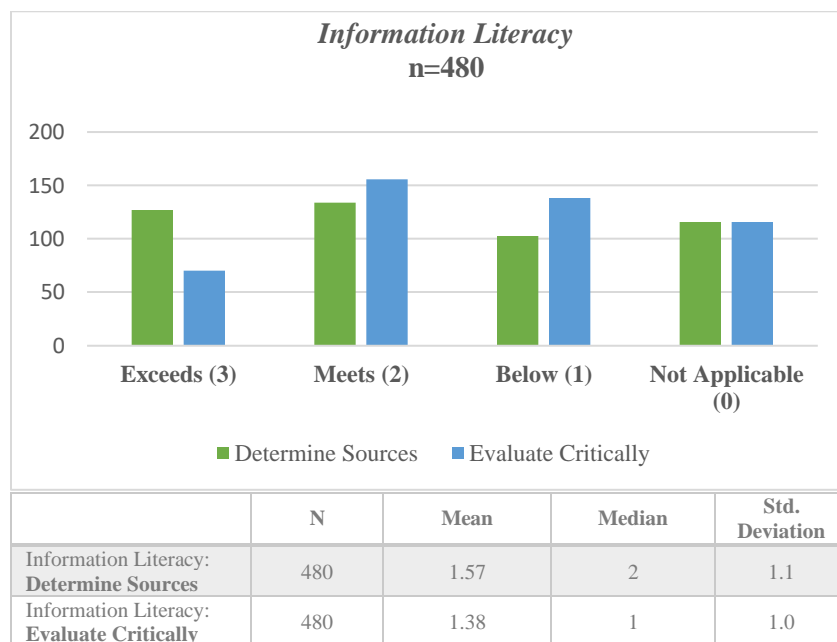
ENGL 202 – Writing and Critical Inquiry (C1)  
ENVH 130 – Environmental Health Systems (C5)  
ENVH 190 – From Black Death to Bioterrorism (FYS)  
ENVH 200 – Intro to Public Health (P1)  
ENVH 210 - Global Disparities in Public Health (P6)

FTP 340 – Filmmakers on Filmmaking (P4)  
GEOL 141 – Earth History & Prehistoric Life (C5)  
PAR 251 – Islam, Past and Present (P6)  
PSY 150 – General Psychology (P1)

Artifacts aligned with *Information Literacy* were scored against the following rubric, which measures two aspects of the outcome – **determining sources** and **evaluating critically**. Scoring results appear below.

Information Literacy				
<i>Students will identify appropriate information sources and evaluate critically the credibility of those sources for relevance, legitimacy, and bias.</i>				
	Exceeds Expectations (3)	Meets Expectations (2)	Below Expectations (1)	Not Applicable (0)
Determine Information Sources	Chooses a variety of information sources appropriate to the research question. All selected information sources relate directly to concepts or question at hand.	Chooses a variety of information sources. The majority of selected information sources relate directly to concepts or question at hand.	Chooses only a few information sources, or most of the chosen sources do not relate directly to concepts or question at hand.	Artifact does not align with the rubric and/or artifact cannot be scored.
Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically	Source selection uses all of the following criteria for evaluation: relevance to research, legitimacy, and bias/point of view.	Source selection uses two of the following criteria for evaluation: relevance to research, legitimacy, and bias/point of view.	Source selection uses none or one of the following criteria for evaluation: relevance to research, legitimacy, and bias/point of view.	Artifact does not align with the rubric and/or artifact cannot be scored.

\*Adapted from the AAC&U's *Value Rubrics*



**Summary Results: Information Literacy**

55% of student work in the **Determine Sources** category met or exceeded expectations. The breakdown was:

Exceeds	Meets	Below	N/A – No Score
27%	28%	21%	24%

48% of student work in the **Evaluate Critically** category met or exceeded expectations. The breakdown was:

Exceeds	Meets	Below	N/A – No Score
15%	33%	28%	24%

**6. Quantitative Data – Awareness of Self**

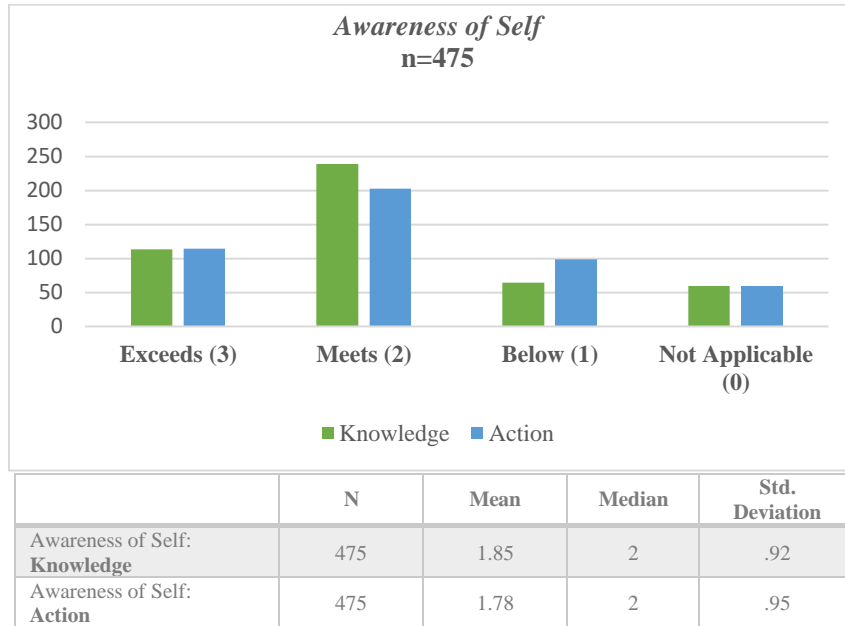
A total of 475 artifacts were scored for *Awareness of Self*, representing a random sample of the total artifacts received. These artifacts were submitted by instructors of the following courses:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| DA 259 – Dance Appreciation (P5)                      | ND 190 – Personal Nutrition (FYS)               |
| EDCI 191 – Teachers, Schools, and Society (FYS)       | PAR 101 – Western Philosophical Traditions (P4) |
| FIN 350 – So You Want to Be A Millionaire (P1)        | PAR 102 – Western Moral Traditions (P4)         |
| FPA 101 – Experiencing the Arts (P5)                  | PAR 201 – Philosophy of Sex & Love (P4)         |
| HEAL 111 – Stress Management for Health/Wellness (C4) | PAR 323 – Mysticism (P4)                        |
| HEAL 123 – Health & Wellness (C4)                     | PRM 365 – Nature Rx (P4)                        |
| HSCC 101 – Nutrition, Fitness, & Wellness (C4)        | PSY 320 – Childhood Psychology (P1)             |
| HSCC 205 – Women’s Health (P6)                        | PSY 331 – Human Sexuality (P1)                  |
| IDES 250 – Intro to Interior Design (P4)              | RTH 190 – Disability as Diversity (FYS)         |

The *Awareness of Self* rubric appears below, followed by the scoring results.

Awareness of Self				
<i>Students will recognize behaviors and define choices that affect their lifelong well-being.</i>				
	Exceeds Expectations (3)	Meets Expectations (2)	Below Expectations (1)	Not Applicable (0)
Knowledge	Examines thoughtfully how learning might lead to changes in personal behavior.	Identifies the connection between knowledge, choice, and overall well-being.	Does not identify behaviors that contribute to lifelong well-being.	Artifact does not align with the rubric and/or artifact cannot be scored.
Action/Resources	Pursues beyond the classroom knowledge and experiences that affect lifelong well-being.	Acknowledges a repertoire of choices that affect and impact well-being.	Unable to articulate the link between behavioral choices and resulting consequences.	Artifact does not align with the rubric and/or artifact cannot be scored.

\*Adapted from the AAC&U's *Value Rubrics*



**Summary Results: Awareness of Self**

74% of student work in the **Knowledge** category met or exceeded expectations. The scoring breakdown was:

Exceeds	Meets	Below	N/A – No Score
24%	50%	14%	12%

67% of student work in the **Action** category met or exceeded expectations. The scoring breakdown was:

Exceeds	Meets	Below	N/A – No Score
24%	43%	21%	12%

**7. Quantitative Data – Means of Expression**

A total of 987 artifacts were scored for *Means of Expression* representing a random sample of the total artifacts received. These artifacts were submitted by instructors of the following courses:

- CIS 195 – The Information Society at Work (FYS)
- CM 190 – Green Building & Sustainability (FYS)
- CM 365 – Construction & Culture (P6)
- COMM 201 – Foundations of Communication (C3)
- ECON 344 – Ethics of Capitalism (P4)
- ENGL 101 – Writing and Rhetoric (C1)
- ENVH 190 – From Black Death to Bioterrorism (FYS)
- FPA 190 – Freshman Seminar: Fine and Performing Arts (FYS)
- HIST 190 – History Topics (FYS)

- HIST 220 – Ancient Empires (P3)
- HIST 222 – European History Since 1517 (P3)
- HIST 236 – Native American Lives (P3)
- HIST 237 – African American History (P3)
- HIST 351 – Renaissance and Reformation (P3)
- LAW 201 – Individual Rights (P4)
- LAW 406 – Media Law (P1)
- MATH 101 – Mathematical Concepts (C2)
- PAR 146 – Western Religious Traditions (P4)
- PAR 250 – Origins of Early Christian Traditions (P4)
- PAR 304 – Ancient Greek Thought (P4)

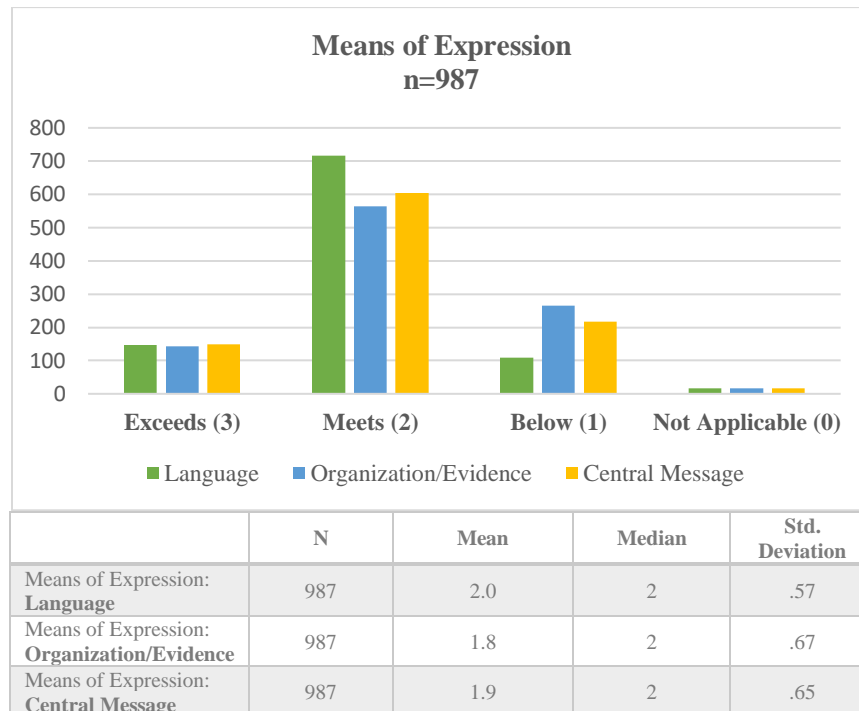
PAR 306 – Early Modern Philosophy (P4)  
 PAR 309 – Philosophy in & of Film (P4)  
 PAR 312 – Philosophy of Religion (P4)  
 PAR 320 – Philosophical & Religious Classics (P4)

PAR 353 – Religion in Film (P4)  
 PSY 320 – Childhood Psychology (P1)  
 PSY 331 – Human Sexuality (P1)  
 SOC 160 – Chinese Culture & Society (P6)

The *Means of Expression* rubric and scoring results appear below.

Means of Expression				
<i>Students will craft written and/or oral communication demonstrating organization, clarity, logic, and recognition of various audiences.</i>				
	Exceeds Expectations (3)	Meets Expectations (2)	Below Expectations (1)	Not Applicable (0)
Language	Language use is meaningful and skillful. Demonstrates command of and fluency with the appropriate register, syntax, and convention.	Demonstrates command of language, syntax, and convention that conveys meaning with few errors.	Language used impedes meaning due to errors in usage and convention.	Artifact does not align with the rubric and/or artifact cannot be scored.
Recognition of Audience	Crafts communication that is responsive and informed by audience, context, and form.	Crafts communication that demonstrates a recognition of audience, context, and form. (Demonstrates at least 2 of the 3)	Reflects minimal attention to audience, context, and appropriate form.	Artifact does not align with the rubric and/or artifact cannot be scored.
Central Message	Central message is compelling, convincing, professionally communicated, and strongly supported.	Central message is clear and consistent with supporting material.	Central message is not clearly articulated and must be deduced.	Artifact does not align with the rubric and/or artifact cannot be scored.

\*Adapted from the AAC&U's *Value Rubrics*



**Summary Results: Means of Expression**

87% of student work in the **Language** category met or exceeded expectations. The scoring breakdown was:

Exceeds	Meets	Below	N/A – No Score
14%	73%	11%	2%

72% of student work in the **Organization/Evidence** category met or exceeded expectations. The scoring breakdown was:

Exceeds	Meets	Below	N/A – No Score
14%	58%	26%	2%

76% of student work in the **Central Message** category met or exceeded expectations. The scoring breakdown was:

Exceeds	Meets	Below	N/A – No Score
15%	61%	22%	2%

**8. Review of Course Syllabi**

Instructors were asked to submit a syllabus as part of the assessment process, and the LS Program received syllabi from **126 out of 130 instructors**.

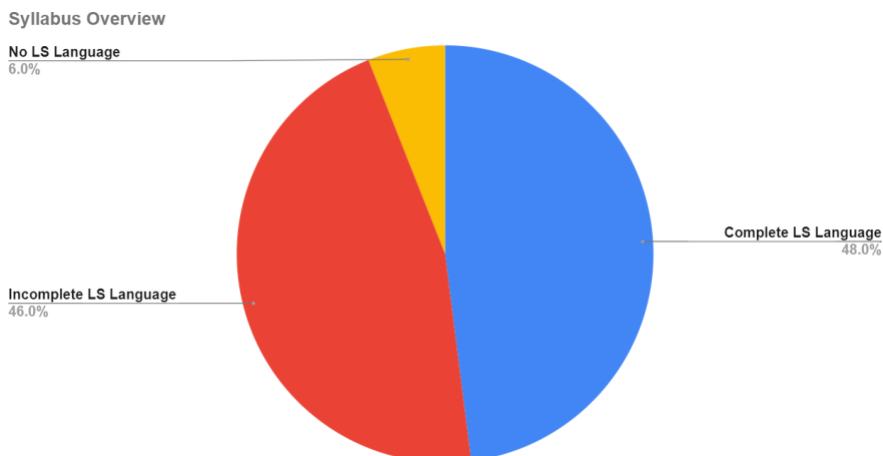
Based upon the Liberal Studies syllabus template guidelines (accessible through both the Liberal Studies and Coulter Faculty Commons websites), the faculty assessors expected that each syllabus would:

- 1) include a statement describing to which LS category the course belongs (C1, P3, P6, etc.);**
- 2) list only the LS outcomes with which that course aligned; and**
- 3) include a statement that student work may be collected for LS assessment.**

In AY 2022-2023, **48% of syllabi included language that fully complied with the Liberal Studies guidelines**. This is an increase from AY 2021-2022 when 43% of syllabi were in full compliance, and it's identical to AY 2020-2021 when 48% of syllabi were in full compliance.

The chart on the next page offers a general breakdown of this year's syllabus results.





## 9. Qualitative/Formative Feedback

After scoring each course’s student artifacts, assessors were asked a series of questions relating to the assignment’s alignment with its relevant LS learning outcome. A summary of those questions appears in the box below (full survey appears in Appendix 1):

- Did the instructor provide the assignment guidelines/instructions?
- How strongly did the assignment design align with the outcome it was created to measure?
- Please provide specific feedback on the assignment design as it relates to the relevant student learning outcome. For example, what were the strengths of this assignment design? What improvements might strengthen its alignment in future semesters?
- Would this assignment provide a strong exemplar for other faculty members looking for guidance in their own artifact design for this particular outcome?

The table below summarizes the survey results regarding the strength of an assignment’s alignment with its intended learning outcome (*Information Literacy, Awareness of Self, and Means of Expression*).

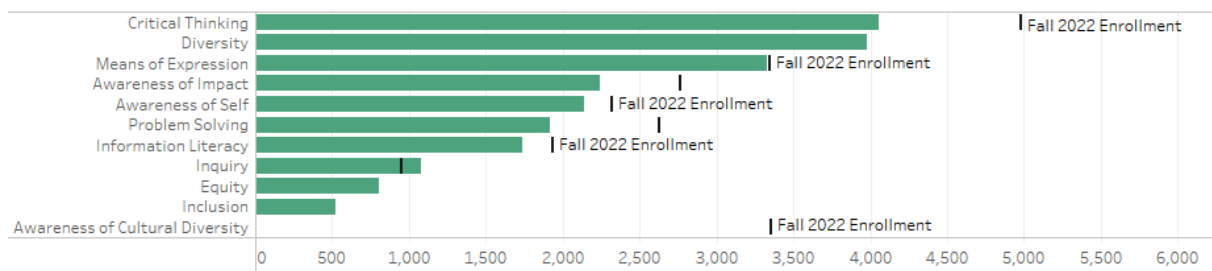
Information Literacy – Assignment Alignment		
Strong alignment	Moderate alignment	Little to no alignment
18%	49%	33%
Awareness of Self – Assignment Alignment		
Strong alignment	Moderate alignment	Little to no alignment
43%	34%	23%
Means of Expression – Assignment Alignment		
Strong alignment	Moderate alignment	Little to no alignment
40%	44%	16%

Additionally, in the interest of encouraging continuous improvement within the LS Program, the Liberal Studies Assessment Director provides each individual instructor with formative feedback for their specific course. Department heads also receive a summary of the aggregate quantitative scores for the courses within their discipline (see Appendices 2 and 3 for sample feedback).

## 10. Student Learning Outcomes: Dashboard Data

The Liberal Studies Program has access to a Tableau dashboard indicating enrollment within the Program by **student learning outcome**. The resulting data allows us to see how many courses are being offered each year for each learning outcome, as well as how many students are enrolled in courses aligned with specific learning outcomes.

The bar graph below provides an example of the dashboard in action. The green bars indicate Fall 2023 enrollment, and the chart also provides comparison markers for Fall 2022 enrollment by outcome. The Awareness of Cultural Diversity outcome has been retired and replaced by the Diversity outcome as of Fall 2023 – that is why it appears with no enrollment on the chart below. And the Equity and Inclusion outcomes are new as of Fall 2023, which is why they have no Fall 2022 enrollment comparison.



## 11. Summary and Recommendations

The final section of this report summarizes the assessment data in the two areas suggested by the current Liberal Studies Assessment Plan –

- 1) how strongly does student work demonstrate the learning goals within the LS Program;
- 2) what recommendations do the data suggest for strengthening the LS Program?

**Both areas are addressed in detail below.**

### A. How strongly does student work demonstrate the learning goals within the LS Program?

The current threshold for student achievement (as set by the Liberal Studies Committee) is that 80% of student work should meet or exceed expectations. And if a particular category does not meet the 80% threshold, then that category should have improved by at least two percentage points when compared to its last assessment until it reaches at least 80%.

The following tables summarize and compare the current and historical assessment results for each category within the *Information Literacy*, *Awareness of Self*, and *Means of Expression* outcomes. Any results that either met the 80% threshold or the 2% improvement goal are highlighted in yellow.

#### a. Information Literacy –

	AY 2019-20 Meets or Exceeds	AY 2022-23 Meets or Exceeds
<b>Determine Sources</b>	70%	55%
<b>Evaluate Critically</b>	69%	48%

The data indicate that there has been a marked decrease in student achievement in *Information Literacy* since the 2019-20 assessment period. And neither the **Determine Sources** nor **Evaluate Critically** categories came anywhere close to meeting the 80% threshold during this past year.

This year's *Information Literacy* results were certainly disappointing and the drop in student performance from 2019-2020 to 2022-2023 is startling. There is one potential explanation, however, and it deserves some discussion. Many of this year's lowest scoring *Information Literacy* artifacts were from one particular course with numerous sections, and most of those sections were taught by graduate students. The department overseeing that course has indicated to the LS Assessment Director that it does not typically inform its graduate teaching assistants about the requirements of the LS assessment process or offer them strategies for more effective LS assignment design. We should also note that this particular course was not assessed during the 2019-20 period, which is why it didn't impact the previous results. These factors likely account for this year's significantly lower *Information Literacy* scores.

Over the past year, the LS Assessment Director has had many conversations with that department, and as a result, the department has decided to focus on a different LS outcome going forward. They have also promised to inform their future graduate teaching assistants about the LS assessment process. Time will tell whether their upcoming efforts will reflect an improvement in the assessment results.

**b. Awareness of Self –**

	<b>AY 2020-21 Meets or Exceeds</b>	<b>AY 2022-23 Meets or Exceeds</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	72%	74%
<b>Action/Resources</b>	71%	67%

The data suggest mixed results for this year's *Awareness of Self* assessment. On the positive side, the **Knowledge** category met the 2% improvement threshold over its previous assessment results. The **Action/Resources** category, however, decreased by 4% points over that same period.

**c. Means of Expression –**

We must note that the *Means of Expression* outcome was revised in between assessment periods, so the current **Organization/Evidence** category did not exist during the AY 2019-20 – instead, the outcome measured **Recognition of Audience** at that time. Therefore, we can't make a direct comparison in scoring for **Organization/Evidence**.

	<b>AY 2019-20 Meets or Exceeds</b>	<b>AY 2022-23 Meets or Exceeds</b>
<b>Language</b>	88%	87%
<b>Organization/Evidence</b>	N/A	72%
<b>Central Message</b>	86%	76%

This year's *Means of Expression* results were also mixed. Student work was outstanding in the **Language** category, and indeed, it was the only category measured this year across outcomes that met (and exceeded) the 80% performance threshold. Student work in both the other categories was strong and met the LSC's previous baseline threshold of 70% but we should note that work in the **Central Message** category declined by 10% over a three-year period.

*B. What recommendations do the data suggest for strengthening the Liberal Studies Program?*

**1. The Liberal Studies Program should consider revising the *Means of Expression* rubric so that it measures only TWO categories – rather than the current THREE.**

This recommendation is based on feedback from our summer assessors, as well as the observations of the LS assessment director over multiple years of assessment. Asking assessors to score across three rubric categories at the summer workshop is difficult from a time-management perspective. The LSC has, over the past several years, reduced all other LS rubrics to one or two categories and should consider doing the same for *Means of Expression*. The upcoming year may be a good time to consider such a revision because the LSC has already been informally discussing revising the *Means of Expression* outcome to include visual communication.

**2. The Liberal Studies Program should consider revising the *Information Literacy* outcome to account for the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI).**

Several of our summer assessors, along with outside stakeholders, have spoken with the LS Assessment Director about the need to revise the *Information Literacy* outcome so that it considers a student's ability to recognize the impact of artificial intelligence on information legitimacy.

**3. The Liberal Studies Committee should discuss the lack of continuous improvement in results over time.**

This year's assessment results suggest that the LS Program is mostly maintaining its levels of student achievement against its outcomes, and that's certainly good news. At the same time, though, the data indicate that there is little progression or continuous improvement in student achievement over time, and that many of our assessment results aren't meeting the baseline achievement bar set by the LS Program. There are likely many factors to consider that contribute to the lack of continuous improvement, and it may be a difficult issue to address. At the very least, though, it's worth a discussion.

## 12. APPENDIX 1: Summer Workshop Faculty Assessor Survey

### LS Summer Workshop 2023

Feedback on Assignment Design

What is the artifact number? \*

Short answer text

What is your team number? \*

Short answer text

Which outcome is assigned to this artifact? \*

- Awareness of Self
- Means of Expression
- Information Literacy

Did the instructor provide the assignment guidelines/instructions? \*

- Yes
- No

How strongly did the assignment design align with the outcome it was created to measure? \*

- Strong alignment [no revision needed - the assignment design aligns well with its assigned outcome.]
- Moderate alignment [certain elements align, but revisions to assignment design would create an even str...
- Little to no alignment [reconsider using this assignment in future semesters - major revisions needed to ...

Please provide specific feedback on the assignment design as it relates to the relevant student learning outcomes. For example, what were the strengths of this assignment design? What improvements might strengthen its alignment in future semesters? \*

Long answer text

Would this assignment provide a strong exemplar for other faculty members looking for guidance in their own assignment design for this particular outcome? \*

- Yes
- No

### 13. APPENDIX 2: Sample Feedback sent to Department Heads

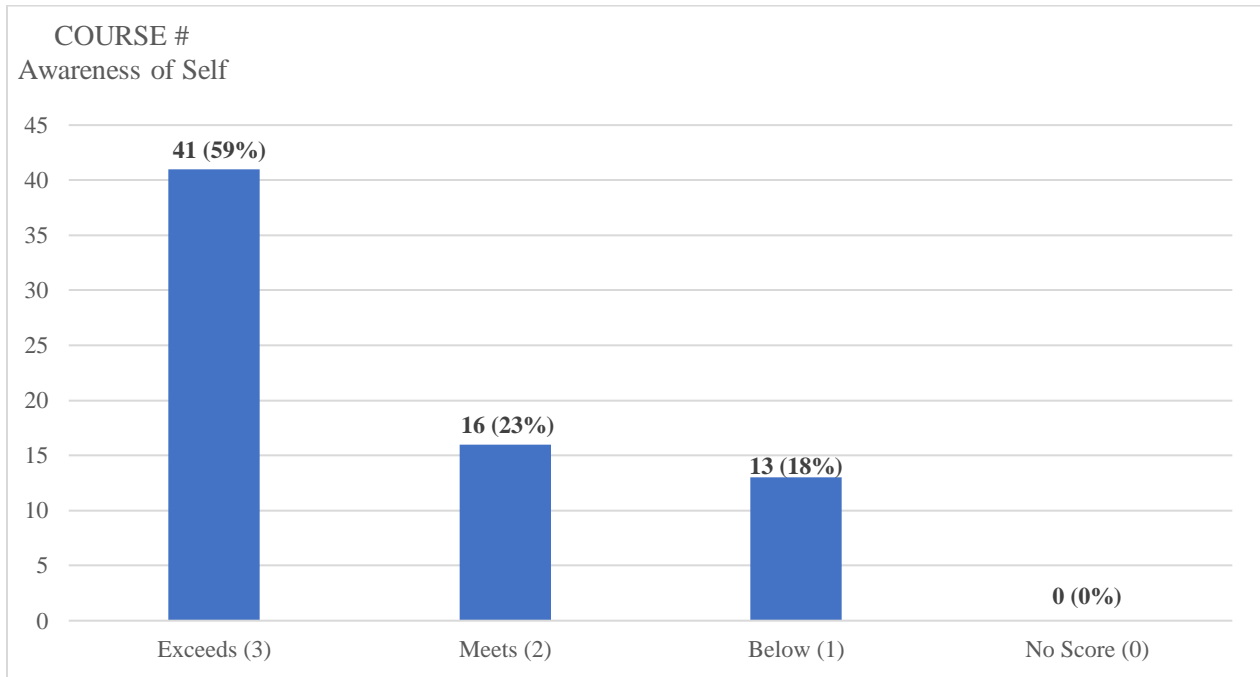
Name of Department

**The Liberal Studies Program’s goal for each learning outcome is that at least 80% of artifacts “meet” or “exceed” expectations.**

The assessment results for COURSE # and its relationship to the *Awareness of Self* learning outcome appear below. These scores are aggregated, so if one course had multiple sections, the scores for all sections have been combined.

*Awareness of Self*

**COURSE # – COURSE NAME**



	N	Median	Std. Deviation
COURSE #	70	3	.79

- **82% of COURSE # artifacts scored as either “meets” or “exceeds” expectations.**

#### 14. APPENDIX 3: Sample Feedback sent to Individual Instructor

INSTRUCTOR NAME COURSE # <i>Awareness of Self</i>	
Please offer feedback on the Liberal Studies language on syllabus.	<p>The Liberal Studies syllabus language looks great, with one small exception. Please include a sentence stating that student work may be collected for assessment. Otherwise, the language is spot on.</p> <p>For reference, a template of this syllabus language is available on the LS assessment web page at: <a href="https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-enrichment/liberal-studies-program/assessment.aspx">https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-enrichment/liberal-studies-program/assessment.aspx</a></p>
Did the instructor provide the assignment guidelines?	Yes- thank you!
How well did the assignment align with the outcome it was designed to measure?	Strong alignment
Please provide detailed feedback on the assignment design as it relates the relevant student learning outcome.	Really excellent assignment that meets its goal quite well. Not only does it require students to share their own thoughts/ideas and pair it with research, it requires students to consider issues and effects on a global scale. Great assignment design!