

Liberal Studies Committee Response and Action Plan

C3 Assessment Team Recommendations

4 April 2017

A. Are we delivering what we say we do?

Recommendations

1 (a). Include an explicit statement of the Liberal Studies C3 Oral Communication Outcomes on all COMM 201 syllabi.

We also recommend standardization of titles/headings on the syllabi related to the course objectives and learning outcomes on the syllabi to improve clarity of what is being assessed for the benefit of students and the LS Assessment Team.

The committee recognizes the importance of the specific C3 outcomes for student learning, but the LSC stands by its previous decision that Liberal Studies syllabi need only highlight the **general** LS outcomes, since those are the outcomes on which categories are assessed. Thus, the committee recommends no action on the first part of the recommendation. Faculty are welcome to include the specific learning outcomes for Oral Communication on their syllabi.

The LSC concurs with the second part of the recommendation regarding the standardization of titles/headings and general outcomes on syllabi. The COMM department has signaled its support for these actions, as well.

***Action Item:** The LSC chair will contact the head of the Communication Department to follow-up on the Fall 2017 implementation of this recommendation.*

2(a). Provide the course assignment that generated the artifacts to the Assessment Team so that we know what the learning goals and expected outcomes are. It would also be useful to know at what point in the semester the assignment took place, and whether the instructor's expectations were for novice, intermediate, or advanced skills in order to gauge the students' learning achievements.

The committee agrees that assignment parameters should be included within LS assessment. A similar recommendation was made by previous assessment teams, and as a response, assignment information was collected as part of the Spring 2017 assessment process.

***Action Item:** Continue to monitor the assessment processes to ensure relevant assignment instructions are included.*

3(a). Provide the pre- and post-test assessments conducted by the Communication Department to the LS assessment team. It would be helpful to know whether the department is measuring the same SLOs as the LS committee.

The LSC recognizes that pre/post assessments were initially considered as a measure of assessment, but were rejected in favor of the video artifact approach. Upon consideration of feedback provided by the Communication Department liaison, the LSC concurs that pre/post assessments (or another method, as yet undetermined) may offer a more effective means of Liberal Studies SLO measurement.

***Action Item:** The LSC will continue its conversations with the Communication Department in the Fall of 2017 to consider the viability of utilizing the pre/post-tests as an assessment instrument, as well as other means of assessments.*

B. Are students learning what we want them to?

Recommendations:

1 (b). Change the assessment rubric and artifacts so that all three elements of the C3 learning outcomes are assessed.

2 (b). Provide alternative artifacts in other formats so that the other two competencies (interpersonal communication and small group communication) can be assessed and so sample sizes can be increased.

3 (b). Remove competency (d) “to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience” from the rubric, unless it is relevant to the artifacts given.

4 (b). Reword the vague and nonparallel descriptions on the rubric of what it means to “demonstrate the ability to speak effectively” at each competency level – emerging through exemplary – to clarify scorer confusion about the meaning of this competency.

5 (b). Provide artifacts comprising paired videos or other assignments from early and later in the semester, so that the reviewers may better assess student learning arising from the course.

The LSC considered the Section B recommendations collectively, since they are similar in nature. In response, the committee supports the following ideas:

- LS assessment should focus on evaluating learning against the general Liberal Studies outcomes – which, in this case, means the (3c) oral communication outcomes. To better measure SLO 3c, the process needs to be reconsidered in terms of the artifacts and/or assessment instrument used to better capture a measurement of the relevant competencies.
- descriptions on the rubric require more clarity regarding what constitutes each competency level – emerging through exemplary.

-the SLO itself should be reexamined and perhaps split into separate outcomes, rather than stand in its current form.

Action Items: *During the Fall 2017 semester, the LSC:*

- will continue to communicate and work with the Communication Department to decide upon a more effective assessment instrument for Liberal Studies SLO 3c (oral communication).
 - will consider whether it wants to divide the 3c student learning outcome into its constituent parts – demonstrate the ability to speak clearly, demonstrate the ability to speak coherently, demonstrate the ability to speak effectively, and demonstrate the ability to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience .
 - will revisit the rubric to clearly define and clarify the various competency levels.
 - recommends that the report be shared with COMM 201 instructors in the interest of transparency and data-sharing.
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C. What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?

Recommendations:

1 (c). COMM 201 course objectives should integrate the Liberal Studies SLOs so that any assessment data collected by the department can also be used by the LS assessment team.

2 (c). COMM 201 instructors should be given the LS rubric and a chance to provide feedback so that the actual course objectives can be used to improve the rubric.

The LSC supports fully keeping an open line of communication between itself and the Communication Department regarding the collection and measurement of Liberal Studies assessment data.

Action Item: In the spring of 2017, the LSC chair will communicate with the Communication Department and provide it with the current assessment rubric and SLOs. By the end of fall 2017, the LSC chair will follow-up with the Communication Department regarding any pending changes that may have been made to the rubric or student learning outcomes.

3 (c). The university should provide necessary resources to enable the Program Director to lead these charges (e.g., summer salary), as well as resources for adequate faculty coverage of COMM 201. Discontinuity in the Communication Department C3 Program leadership has hampered the department's ability to implement previously recommended changes to the program.

The LSC concurs with this recommendation.

D. Recommendations for Improvement of Assessment Processes in General

In general, the norming and scoring processes worked well. We recommend continued use of Blackboard, Panopto and Qualtrics for content delivery and scoring. We recommend adding a Discussion Board to the Blackboard shell for members of the assessment team to use, as well as a place to upload and share working drafts of the report, as opposed to using email and Dropbox for these purposes. This will streamline the assessment processes.

The Director of Assessment was very helpful throughout the process, but may have been overwhelmed by his multifaceted work responsibilities in terms of his ability to generate the quantitative analyses on the timeline desired by the Liberal Studies committee. We recommend additional resources be provided to the Assessment Director to assist him in completion of the LS assessment tasks.

The committee supports these recommendations. The LSC acknowledges the improvement over the past year in norming and scoring processes and appreciates the contribution of the Director of Assessment in this regard.

The LSC recognizes also, that even with recent improvements, the assessment process remains lengthy and complicated. At times, the process has proven onerous for an already overburdened assessment office, as well as for the faculty submitting student artifacts and serving as assessors.

Action Item: The LSC will explore assessment alternatives in the hopes of streamlining the process, while still maintaining robust assessment practices.