

# COMMON CURRICULUM PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

[Adopted by the General Education Board on 15 July 2013; Revised May 2015]

## II. COMMON CURRICULUM LEARNING OUTCOMES

### II.A. PREMISE

The premise for the common learning outcomes lies in the Union Education framework, the recent study of the Liberal Arts by Professor Mark Roche at the University of Notre Dame, and Union College president Stephen Ainlay's concept of 'think, connect, act.' Roche identified three complementary purposes of a Liberal Arts education: 1) the **practical value** of critical thinking and communication skills that can be applied beyond college or university education; 2) the **intrinsic worth** of the Liberal Arts disciplines and intellectual experiences gained by studying broadly in them; 3) the **idealistic purpose** of the Liberal Arts in that they encourage, even demand, that one ask meaningful questions in the course of becoming someone who lives a reflective life.

### II.B. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through the Common Curriculum, Union students will develop the breadth of knowledge and flexibility of mind needed to participate in meaningful conversations relevant to particular disciplines, the Academy, local society, or the global community. They will do so by achieving these learning outcomes across the breadth of Liberal Arts represented in the Common Curriculum requirements:

- A. **Communicate Critical and Analytical Thinking.** *Students will examine, evaluate, and apply problem-solving techniques to evidence, data, objects, artefacts, arguments, and theories according to the diverse analytical traditions of the Liberal Arts; students will communicate clearly and correctly the results of such analysis.* **Explanation:** this learning outcome emphasizes the need to learn and practice critical thinking in the breadth of disciplines and analytical traditions in the Liberal Arts. Instructors assess student learning in this outcome by evaluating a representative sample of assignments for the effective communication of the results of the student's critical inquiry.
- B. **Make Connections or Original Contributions.** *Through their writings, theories, problems, designs, objects of art, and other projects students will make connections or original contributions to questions and concerns relevant to a particular discipline, the Academy, local society, or the global community.* **Explanation:** this learning outcome emphasizes the importance of deliberately using students' coursework to engage issues, debates, schools of thought, and the like relevant to particular disciplines as well as the Academy, local society, or the global community. Instructors assess student learning in this outcome by evaluating a representative sample of assignments for such connections.

- C. **Reflect on Their Learning.** *Students will demonstrate the ability to link their experiences in the Common Curriculum with their intellectual development as lifelong learners.* **Explanation:** this learning outcome may be viewed as asking the students to draw together the practical, intrinsic, and idealistic value of the Liberal Arts as they relate to being a life-long learner and, perhaps, asking those big questions. The Gen Ed Board assesses learning outcome C indirectly through a student reflective essay and student interview; instructors provide direct assessment of this learning outcome **if** it is observed in their classes.

## II.C. ADDITIONAL FYP/FYP-H LEARNING OUTCOMES

First-Year Preceptorial (FYP) and Honors Preceptorial (FYP-H) have more specific learning outcomes under Learning Outcome A, as follows:

- A1. Discusses ideas:** critically and respectfully engages in dialogue with others about ideas in texts as well as those expressed in class.
- A2. Reads texts critically:** shows an understanding of/ability to evaluate complex and sophisticated ideas from multiple and diverse perspectives.
- A3. Develops effective arguments:**
- A3a.** Supports a focused thesis, including analysis of evidence to support conclusions.
- A3b.** Organizes information logically and clearly in essays that guide readers through the text
- A3c.** Expresses ideas clearly and appropriately, with few, if any, grammar, usage, and spelling errors
- A3d.** Integrates evidence into one's own argument (e.g., uses quotations appropriately, correct citation, etc.).
- A4. Incorporates revision** into the writing process as a means of improving critical thinking and the expression of ideas.

## II.D. ADDITIONAL SRS/SCH LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Sophomore Seminar (SRS) and Scholars Research Seminar (SCH) have more specific learning outcomes under Learning Outcome A, as follows:

- A1. DEVELOP A RESEARCH TOPIC:** Formulate a clear, focused research question or thesis appropriate to the topic of inquiry.
- A2. FIND EVIDENCE:** Identify and locate evidence appropriate for examining a research question or thesis.
- A3. EVALUATE EVIDENCE:** Critically and ethically analyze evidence obtained for examination of a research question or thesis.
- A4. DEVELOP AN EVIDENCE-BASED ARGUMENT:** Develop and organize a logical argument grounded in the analysis of evidence that supports or refutes a research question or thesis.
- A5. PRESENT RESEARCH FINDINGS:** Present a logical analytical argument supported by evidence in an appropriate written form without errors of grammar, usage, and spelling.
- A6. PRACTICE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CITATION:** Incorporate and cite evidence in a manner that meets the professional standards of the discipline most appropriate for the topic of inquiry.