

## COMMON CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

[submitted by Professor John Cramsie, Director of General Education; 20 May 2014]

### GENERAL EDUCATION SINCE 2010

Since the Middle States report of 2010, the content and administration of the general education program have undergone significant change. The college eliminated the full-time Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies, who (among other responsibilities) ran the General Education Board (Gen Ed Board) and administered the program. A new academic director assumed those responsibilities as Director of General Education (DGE) beginning in Fall 2011. During 2010-2011, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Dean of Studies, the incoming DGE, and, later, a select group of faculty composed a new 'Union Education' framework and description. Reconceptualization of the general education program proceeded in tandem with the Union Education initiative; each informed the other, but, ultimately, the Union Education framework demanded changes to the general education program to bring the two into alignment.

As of 2011, the program, General Education, consisted of three parts as follows:

- Part A: the so-called core, consisting of First-Year Preceptorial and the Sophomore Research Seminar.
- Part B: a large distribution requirement mandating completion of one course each in Literature (HUL), Humanities (HUM), Social Sciences (SOCS), Quantitative and Mathematical Reasoning (QMR), Natural Sciences with Lab (SCLB), and Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET), and two courses in Linguistic and Cultural Competency (LCC).
- Part C: the cluster requirement, that students complete at least three courses from two different departments in an approved thematic cluster.

The program was brought into alignment with the Union Education framework as follows

- Build Intellectual Foundations: First-Year Preceptorial, Research Seminar, Literature (HUL), Quantitative and Mathematical Reasoning (QMR), Natural Sciences with Lab (SCLB).
- Explore the Liberal Arts: Humanities (HUM), Social Sciences (SOCS), Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET).
- Make Connections Across Boundaries: two courses in Linguistic and Cultural Competency (LCC), Clusters, and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

The individual requirements of the original parts A and B have not changed, but they have been reimagined as something more than boxes to check on an advising worksheet. Each has been given a thematic description that heretofore had been absent; thus, we explain for students that courses in Literature "expand the moral imagination needed to understand yourself and your fellow human beings through literary analysis, interpretation, and reflection." We also changed the program's name from the underwhelming and generic "General Education" to "The Common Curriculum" in keeping with the new emphasis on the program as **the** essential foundation of a Liberal Arts education shared by all Union students regardless of their individual interests and majors. Finally, the general faculty voted in June

2013 to eliminate the cluster requirement, the original part C. This is the essential background for understanding the assessment of the Common Curriculum between 2011 and 2014.

From May 2012 to July 2013, the Gen Ed Board and DGE took up a November 2011 charge from the Academic Affairs Council (AAC) to develop an assessment plan for the Common Curriculum. The AAC charge responded to the 2010 Middle States report on general education assessment, the reconceptualization of the program just described, and intractable problems associated with provisional assessment plans drawn up for the original parts B and C of General Education. FYP and SRS, the former part A, were specifically exempted because both already had established assessment processes. The Gen Ed Board finalized the assessment process after twelve months of development, review, and input from faculty, responsible committees (AAC), and administrative officers (Director of Assessment, Dean of Studies, Dean of the Faculty). The Gen Ed Board designated 2013-2014 as the pilot-year for testing and improvement, including institutional and technical support.

The Gen Ed Board has been guided by the Middle States expectations that assessment be a) useful, b) cost-effective, c) reasonably accurate and truthful, d) planned, and e) organized, systematized, and sustained. The logical outcome of the previous assessment plan for General Education failed both a. and b; it never reached the point at which c., d., and e. could be tested, but we saw no evidence that it could be organized or sustained. Fully implemented, the process would have resulted in many hundreds of individual student assessments each term. In many cases individual instructors would have been responsible for developing their own assessment instruments and conducting dozens of individual student assessments in a single class. Further, no faculty member, department, or Gen Ed Board could possibly process a thousand or more reports to produce useful information on an annual basis.

The Gen Ed Board and DGE responded with a very different approach. Above all we went back to the simple principle that the general education program embodies the essential foundations for a Liberal Arts education. It should express what we value most about the Liberal Arts: critical thinking and analytical reasoning, connections to broader debates or concerns inside and outside the Academy, and reflective learning, all developed through the breadth of intellectual traditions and disciplines represented in the Liberal Arts. We created an assessment that went beyond a grab bag of individual distribution requirements unconnected to one another and without any kind of broader perspective informing them.

We assess common learning outcomes built around the essential purposes of the program. Courses continue to be approved for inclusion in the Common Curriculum. The instructor must satisfactorily explain both 1) how common learning outcomes will be embedded in the course and 2) how the course meets some or all of the category content requirements. Our assessment addresses the common learning outcomes, not category content requirements that must be met up-front for course approval. Category content requirements can be found at [http://www.union.edu/offices/gen-ed/\\_documents/4commoncurriculumassessmentprogrampartiii..pdf](http://www.union.edu/offices/gen-ed/_documents/4commoncurriculumassessmentprogrampartiii..pdf)

For the process itself, we chose targeted assessment by portfolio. It allows us to select a small but useful sample of students in each entering class. Through portfolios that focus on broad learning outcomes in each of the courses students complete, we can see and evaluate the impact of the Common Curriculum on real students over their academic careers and use the findings as the basis to evaluate the program and strive for its improvement.

The process explained below replaced all Common Curriculum assessment except existing assessment programs for FYP and SRS. The Gen Ed Board and DGE intend to fully

integrate FYP and SRS assessment within this new process in due course; the integration process is explained below. What follows explains the common learning outcomes for the rest of the Common Curriculum, the assessment process itself, provisional assessment findings for the 2013-2014 pilot year, how we close the loop on our findings, the proposed integration of SRS and FYP assessment, and the most recent assessment results for SRS and FYP.

## COMMON LEARNING OUTCOMES

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.

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.

### **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

We assess the Common Curriculum by compiling portfolios containing direct and indirect evidence of student learning. The elected members of the Gen Ed Board and the DGE constitute the portfolio evaluators (PEs). They evaluate portfolios at the end of the junior year for each academic class. Direct evidence will consist of 1) existing FYP and SRS assessments and 2) assessments by instructors of student learning in other courses that fulfil the requirements of the Common Curriculum. Indirect evidence will consist of 1) a reflective essay written by students prior to 2) an interview with the Gen Ed Board during the senior year and 3) alumni surveys targeting learning outcome C.

We select a stratified sample of incoming first-year students such that we evaluate between five and eight percent of an academic class. Students selected for the assessment sample (AS) are notified at the start of the academic year. Students attend an information session with the DGE. Students receive complete written information and verbal explanation of their role in the AS. Students are assigned an AS number in order to protect their identity. After registration closes in a given term, faculty with AS students are notified by the DGE of the presence of such students in their classes for whom an assessment must be submitted.

The DGE and Program Assistant compile and archive student portfolios as part of ordinary program administration. Completed portfolios contain copies of the FYP and SRS student assessment; an instructor-completed individual assessment report (IAR) for each Common Curriculum requirement consisting of HUL, QMR, SCLB, HUM, SOCS, SET, LCC; a student reflective essay (SRE) of between one and two pages, and any final summary comments by PEs.

The individual assessment report (IAR) is the centrepiece of the process. The form can be found at <http://webapps.union.edu>. The IAR assesses learning outcomes A and B directly and asks instructors to report evidence of learning outcome C that might be observed. Instructors complete and submit the IAR via a single integrated webapp. The SRE is the most direct assessment of learning outcome C. Students complete and submit the SRE via a single integrated webapp. The SRE prompts students to explain connections between courses and experiences in the Common Curriculum and their intellectual development as lifelong learners. (The Gen Ed Board and DGE will draft, revise, and finalize the SRE in 2014-2015 in advances of its first use in 2016-2017.)

The PEs will spend one week each summer reading the portfolios of a graduating class at the end of their junior year; most or all students will have completed the full Common Curriculum requirements by that stage. SREs will be added to student portfolios upon receipt at the end of the fall term of the senior year. PEs will evaluate each SRE. Students will be interviewed during the winter term of the senior year. PEs will make a conscious effort to explore responses in the SREs and make direct connections to learning outcomes A, B, and C. (The Gen Ed Board and DGE will develop a set of interview questions in 2015-2016.)

Because of the long-lead time to full phase in (three years), PEs will review portfolios for the classes of 2017 and 2018 in stages each year between 2013 and 2016. See Table CC1.

CLASS	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
2017	READ each term	XXX	READ in summer	Interview		
2018		READ in summer	XXX	READ in summer	Interview	
2019			XXX	XXX	READ in summer	Interview

#### **ASSESSMENT FINDINGS 2013-2014**

The primary goals of this assessment for the improvement of student learning in the Common Curriculum are to 1) support reflective teaching and faculty development, 2) encourage pedagogical and curricular innovation, 3) promote transfer of best practice in the Common Curriculum to instruction in other courses, 4) provide a systematic foundation for the on-going evaluation of specific program requirements with a view to improvement, even replacement. We also use this process to review and amend Common Curriculum assessment itself; in the pilot year we have already adapted and clarified the learning outcomes, modified and streamlined the IAR, and added functionality to the IT infrastructure. The annual Assessment Report will include some tabulation of proficiencies in learning outcomes in the AS, but the report will be primarily a narrative of the PEs' analysis, evaluation, and recommendations around these goals.

Because 2013-2014 is the phase in year, we do not have a complete set of student portfolios. We also encountered data collection problems with the pilot webapp form that limited the ease with which we could aggregate and process non-narrative data. Therefore, for our assessment in 2013-2014 the Gen Ed Board and DGE have read and processed the IARs each term with a focus on the narrative results. Our chief findings below are drawn from that information. A new webapp form has been fully tested and launches officially in the fall. With that form, we will be able to aggregate, process, and integrate data according to individual learning outcomes, each of the particular Common Curriculum requirements, each proficiency level, assessment sample year, academic year, and individual courses. The utility of this data will improve with the accumulation of IARs and portfolios across several academic classes. As explained below, the narrative results (and very rudimentary data analysis) already point to possible patterns of importance. Still, we want to reiterate the provisional nature of our assessment findings because we report on a pilot-year process.

Faculty frequently express concern that students do not complete courses in the Common Curriculum early enough for them to act as a real foundation for further academic study or as a spur to explore the Liberal Arts of discover new interests. We found overall that students actually made good progress toward completion of the program in their first year. This was true across all requirements except for SCLB and SET, where the long-standing problem of inadequate seats/sections for first-year and sophomore non-science majors effectively shuts out all but science and engineering students or seniors in courses available for Common Curriculum science credit. See Table CC2.

Number of Common Curriculum courses completed (10 courses required / 9 courses ordinarily taken in an academic year)	Percentage of students in the 2017 sample completing the specified number of Common Curriculum courses in year one
1	0
2	3.8%
3	7.7%
4	11.5%
5	26.9%
6	26.9%
7	19.2%
8	3.8%
9	0

We have the best proficiency data for learning outcome A while learning outcome B provided various challenges in the pilot phase that are explained below. Learning outcome C was added to the IAR in the second stage of the pilot year and we therefore do not have consistent data across the sample class to report. See Table CC3.

Proficiency Level	Percentage of students at the assigned proficiency level in individual assessment reports (IARs)	
	Learning Outcome A Critical and Analytical Thinking	Learning Outcome B Making Connections
Exceptional	2.9%	5.9%
Mastery	23.5%	11.7%
Proficient	41.2%	38.2%
Developmental	29.4%	14.7%
Insufficient	2.9%	2.9%
Not Applicable	0	26.5%

As part of our “real-time” revision of the process, we modified the three learning outcomes during the academic year to clarify and better express the Gen Ed Board’s intent. There were also complications embedded in the results because of modifications to assessment questions between iterations of the webapp form. We therefore chose not to aggregate proficiencies across particular Common Curriculum requirements at this stage. For all these reasons and because of the provisional nature of the data in the pilot year, we do not draw hard and fast conclusions at this point, with two exceptions.

First, we note that instructors held students to a high standard in both learning outcomes but especially in learning outcome A, demonstrated by the large numbers of first-year students at the developmental and proficient levels and the very small number of students at an exceptional level. The narrative description of assignments (which the Gen Ed

Board reviewed, along with accompanying student work) and the assessment of students' learning support these aggregate results.

Second, we found via this data but particularly in the narrative information that learning outcome B presented the most difficulty for departments teaching courses for QMR, SCLB, and SET credit. Some instructors simply stated that the courses were not designed to make connections between essential disciplinary content and either academic debates or broader issues outside the course; it was not deemed appropriate or possible, especially in introductory level courses. The Gen Ed Board concluded that in some instances these comments reflected the poor wording in earlier iterations of learning outcome B. Members actually found evidence of the connections sought via learning outcome B in the assignments and narrative assessment, leading the board to revise the learning outcome. In other instances, the Gen Ed Board found some courses so focussed on the delivery of disciplinary content that it was difficult for instructors to identify and evaluate learning outcome B, even sometimes outcome A. How we propose to address these and other findings is explained below.

### **CLOSING THE LOOP**

Again, the primary goals of this assessment for the improvement of student learning in the Common Curriculum are:

- 1) to support reflective teaching and faculty development
- 2) to encourage pedagogical and curricular innovation
- 3) to promote transfer of best practice in the Common Curriculum to instruction in other courses
- 4) to provide a systematic foundation for the on-going evaluation of specific program requirements with a view to improvement, even replacement.

For 2013-2014 (the pilot year) and 2014-2015 the Gen Ed Board is focussed overwhelmingly on goals one through three. We first of all see the focus on real classrooms, teaching, and student learning as the essential value of assessment for the program. Second, these goals have the greatest potential to encourage 'buy-in' to both Common Curriculum assessment and the program itself. Goal four should naturally follow from the other three in partnership with the administrative oversight and broad intellectual stewardship of the program carried out by the Gen Ed Board and DGE. This is how we close the loop with assessment at the end of the pilot year:

- 1) The questions on the IAR are designed so that faculty scrutinize the pedagogical foundation of assignments with learning outcomes directly in mind. We see evidence in the narrative portion of the IAR that faculty members are indeed doing so. Reading the IARs has precipitated many conversations about instructional design and learning goals with our own courses in mind. Below are some of the ways the Gen Ed Board is developing opportunities for transfer learning to occur for all faculty.
- 2) Faculty currently have direct access to Common Curriculum assessment at three points: a) enrolment in the Nexus course *Teaching the Common Curriculum* (TCC) explained below; b) the program website that contains all the relevant assessment documents, annual reports, and a teaching 'highlights' webpage (including links to actual assignments being taught by instructors in the program); c) the college assessment website.
- 3) Each faculty member is enrolled in TCC as a primary support for faculty development. For the pilot year we have created a folder for Common Curriculum Assessment that

includes practical information, pedagogical guides for teaching and evaluating learning outcome A, and samples from the 2017 IARs organized by Common Curriculum requirements. This folder assists faculty in completing the IAR and in studying teaching and learning in their colleagues' classes. We expect that TCC will evolve to include a dedicated resource folder for each of the program requirements; for example, it currently includes the materials for the SRS faculty workshops, sample syllabi, and assignments. The initiative for creating these resource folders currently comes from the DGE and Gen Ed Board, but much more faculty input will be encouraged. We expect that the annual assessment report, IARs, and supporting materials and information about particular requirements as experienced by real students will provide the opportunity for faculty to reflect on the program or their own teaching within it with a view to pedagogical improvements and innovation.

- 4) As we identify both best practice and areas of concern with respect to goals 1 and 2, the DGE will regularly update the teaching highlights webpage. This webpage is meant to be a kind of one-stop highlight 'reel' of great teaching in the Common Curriculum for interested faculty (with onward links to assignments and the TCC). The Gen Ed Board also holds one assessment workshop a term open to all faculty. For 2013-2014 the workshops dealt with the mechanics of the new process, but future workshops will take on the pedagogical focus of SRS workshops. Finally, the Gen Ed Board will work with the Committee on Teaching (COT), Director of Faculty Development, and other relevant parties to create more targeted instructional workshops. All of these initial steps enable us to work on achieving goal 3.
- 5) The annual assessment report should be a tool for departments and programs to align their courses to the Common Curriculum learning outcomes and evaluate their success in doing so. We will also follow-up directly with chairs and directors whose departments and programs seem most affected by our annual assessment and recommendations. For 2014-2015 we will follow up with all faculty regarding the revisions and guidance for learning outcome B, but we will particularly focus on faculty teaching QMR, SCLB, and SET through direct meetings and targeted workshops (ideally under the auspices of the COT).
- 6) The annual assessment report will provide guidance for the Gen Ed Board in the course approval process. More simply put, it will give the board a basis from which to look for strengths and weaknesses in courses proposed for Common Curriculum credit based on best practice and areas of concern. The board can give faculty better, more specific guidance on revision and resubmission of courses, supported by the resources available in TCC. Further, in 2013, the Gen Ed Board approved and instituted a policy for the review of courses carrying Common Curriculum credit; review of existing courses can be informed by the assessment findings in the same fashion as that for new courses proposals.

### **INTEGRATED COMMON CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT**

Currently, neither FYP nor SRS assessment are fully integrated into the new Common Curriculum assessment process. The Gen Ed Board and DGE intend to integrate them into one Common Curriculum assessment process as follows:

- 1) Continue the individual assessment of each student in each FYP and SRS section per the process outlined below under the Sophomore Research Seminar and First-Year Preceptorial sections.



- 2) Eliminate the paper/hardcopy FYP and SRS assessments in favour of a single integrated webapp IAR built on the current IAR platform. The IAR-FYP and IAR-SRS would substitute the FYP and SRS assessment rubric for learning outcome A in the current IAR. Proficiency categories in the current FYP and SRS rubrics will be replaced by the current IAR proficiency levels, thus creating a consistent set of assessment standards. FYP and SRS instructors will complete the same summative assessment of learning outcome A as in the current IAR to provide an aggregate assessment across all Common Curriculum courses. FYP and SRS instructors will also complete the same summative assessment of learning outcomes B and C to better integrate FYP and SRS within the broad programmatic goals of the Common Curriculum.
- 3) SRS assessment currently resides with the DGE and Program Assistant. These changes will be implemented for SRS assessment beginning in Fall 2014.
- 4) FYP assessment currently resides with the Dean of Studies. The integration proposed above should occur for FYP over two years. Year one should move the assessment process for FYP under the DGE and Program Assistant; faculty development for FYP (workshops) should remain under the Dean of Studies in year one. Year two should move the faculty development for FYP under the DGE and fully integrate it with the broader initiatives for the Common Curriculum outlined above.

### **SOPHOMORE RESEARCH SEMINAR (SRS/SCH) ASSESSMENT**

**SRS/SCH Assessment Process.** Instructors complete the SRS/SCH (Scholars SRS) individual assessment report for each student at the end of the term; the assessment is based on the final research project. Instructors submit the anonymous assessments to the DGE; the process of anonymous assessment and reporting protects student and faculty confidentiality and constitutes a binding condition of SRS/SCH assessment. End of term assessments are compiled and tabulated to produce an overall academic year assessment report; this report is normally posted to the SRS/SCH TCC folder. One SRS/SCH workshop in the Spring term of the academic year processes the assessment results. SRS/SCH faculty in the workshop develop suggestions for program improvements based on any issues that may emerge from reviewing the assessments. The DGE incorporates suggestions (if any) into appropriate on-going and new SRS faculty development or broader program improvements. The SRS/SCH assessment form can be found at <http://www.union.edu/offices/gen-ed/program-administration/assessment/>

**SRS/SCH Assessment Results 2013-2014.** The most recent SRS/SCH assessment results can be found in tables CC4 and CC5 below.

Learning Outcome	Proficiency Level		
	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations
Develop a Research Topic	34.5	57.0	8.5
Find Evidence	34.1	54.3	11.6
Evaluate Evidence	28.3	57.4	14.3
Develop and Evidence-based Argument	22.9	58.9	18.2
Present Research Findings	25.2	58.1	16.7
Practice Professional Standards of Citation	20.5	68.6	10.9

Proficiency Level	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations
Learning Outcome			
Develop a Research Topic	31.7	60.0	8.3
Find Evidence	31.7	58.3	10.0
Evaluate Evidence	23.3	66.7	10.0
Develop and Evidence-based Argument	36.7	53.3	10.0
Present Research Findings	36.7	55.0	8.3
Practice Professional Standards of Citation	29.1	56.6	11.3

**Closing the Loop.** SRS/SCH workshops along with oversight and individual initiatives by the DGE and General Education Board are the chief vehicles for closing the loop on SRS assessment. Topics and content are designed by the DGE and SRS/SCH faculty to help improve pedagogical practices and reflect on the broader purposes and effectiveness of the program. SRS/SCH workshops each term are geared toward the same general themes: faculty development issues for new instructors (Fall); examples of pedagogical and instructional best practice or innovation (Winter); assessment and broader program issues (Spring). These workshops typically occasion broad-ranging discussions and the issues and questions raised and addressed between 2011 and 2014 are the following:

- 1) How do we set program-wide standards for evaluating SRS/SCH research projects?
- 2) How do we teach students to critically and ethically evaluate evidence?
- 3) How do we teach research to undergraduates in just ten weeks?
- 4) Can information literacy be a platform for a more consistent approach to achieving the goals of the SRS/SCH?
- 5) How can electronic instructional infrastructure and Schaffer Library services support the goals of the SRS/SCH?
- 6) How can you use a single, very short assignment (micro-assignment) to teach a lot of critical thinking, research skills, and writing techniques?
- 7) Is an SRS/SCH an SRS/SCH without a 15-18 page term paper as the final 'product'?
- 8) Are SRSs scheduled in the optimum time slot(s) for effective teaching and learning?

Based on these workshops, the Gen Ed Board, DGE, and faculty have worked to close the loop with these initiatives:

- 1) Improve the SRS/SCH folder in TCC as a site devoted to faculty development and teaching strategies for the course.
- 2) Develop and share among SRS/SCH faculty exercises that focus on the critical and ethical evaluation of evidence and its effective incorporation within an argument.
- 3) Develop and share among SRS/SCH faculty exercises that focus on the effective incorporation of evidence within an argument.
- 4) Improve deliberateness with which links between pedagogical strategies and learning goals are communicated to students in syllabi, assignments, and in overall instruction.
- 5) Hold 'marking workshops' as part of SRS/SCH faculty development to improve consistency of standards across sections.

- 6) Consider more specific and descriptive proficiency categories for the assessment instrument; this will be addressed in the integration of SRS/SCH assessment with the new Common Curriculum assessment process.

Finally, the Gen Ed Board and DGE have also begun evaluating broader questions surrounding the SRS/SCH as it enters its eighth year. They have undertaken the following:

- 1) The Gen Ed Board has begun a review of the statement of goals and purposes on the SRS portion of the Common Curriculum website around a stronger emphasis on inquiry/problem-based learning. This process will lead to a revision of the SRS guidelines and proposal process, and, as needed, revision of the SRS assessment rubric. This comes partly in response to the fact that faculty in social sciences and humanities teach the majority of the SRS/SCH sections, typically for structural reasons relating to staffing and resources or the pedagogical inclination of individual faculty members; a number of scientists and engineers have stated that “research” in their fields cannot be taught under the auspices of or according to the existing learning outcomes of the SRS. This is not in fact true except in a very rigid definition of “research” but the Gen Ed Board and DGE do recognize that the goals, purposes, and guidelines as currently stated are responsible for pedagogical misunderstandings of this sort and are determined to address them.
- 2) Solicited, received, and approved several experimental SRSs for 2014-2015 that allow more flexible student research projects outside the strict 15-18 pages term paper.
- 3) The DGE and Gen Ed Board will examine the desirability and feasibility of moving SRS to the first year and making direct linkages between it and FYP as part of a ‘one-two punch’ in the first year experience of Union students. The Honours SRS (SCH) is currently taught in the first year and we will look at the feasibility of making that the norm for all Union first-year students in a phased transition.