

Humanities General Education Annual Assessment Report 2007-08 June 9, 2008

I. Introduction

The Humanities General Education Program serves all OIT degree students, who are each required to take nine credits in this general education area. The program offers courses in art, literature, humanities, music, philosophy, languages, and intercultural communication. The program also offers a number of online courses to serve degree completion students as well as on-campus students.

II. Program Purpose, Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

The Humanities faculty met six times during the fall 2007 to review the current program student learning outcomes. After some discussion, we agreed to revise the outcomes. The final version is listed below.

Humanities General Education Program Purpose

The Humanities General Education Program provides for the study of literature, fine arts, film, language, and philosophy which allows students the opportunity to learn specific methods for critically evaluating human values and conduct within historical and cultural contexts.

Program Educational Objectives

1. Foster intellectual curiosity, global knowledge, critical thinking, personal responsibility, and ethical and cultural awareness.
2. Prepare students to use language effectively.
3. Establish a framework for students to develop an aesthetic appreciation for fine arts.
4. Prepare students to be responsible citizens, lifelong learners, and world-ready leaders in their chosen fields.

Expected Program Learning Outcomes

Graduates from this program will be able to:

1. Articulate significant social, literary, and political perspectives found in humanities in such areas as class, ethnicity, gender, sex, and cultural orientation.
2. Produce a significant amount of interpretive and analytical writing, using appropriate organization, argument, support, vocabulary, documentation and grammar.
3. Read and discuss humanistic works critically with significant reference to structure, metaphor, symbolism and subtext.
4. Develop creative individual expression with fine arts, music or writing.
5. Explain how historical and social contexts influence various types of artistic expression.
6. Identify and discuss universal themes reflected in the humanities.

III. Three-Year Cycle for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The faculty agreed that we will have six main outcomes and will assess one or two each year on a three-year cycle, as listed in Table 1 below.

Learning Outcomes	'07-08	'08-09	'09-10	'10-11	'11-12	'12-13
1. Articulate significant social, literary, and political perspectives found in humanities in such areas as class, ethnicity, gender, sex, and cultural orientation.	X			X		
2. Produce a significant amount of interpretive and analytical writing using appropriate organization, argument, support, vocabulary, documentation and grammar.	X			X		
3. Read and discuss humanistic works critically with significant reference to structure, metaphor, symbolism and subtext.			X			X
4. Develop creative individual expression with fine arts, music or writing.			X			X
5. Explain how historical and social contexts influence various types of artistic expression.		X			X	
6. Identify and discuss universal themes reflected in the humanities.		X			X	

Table 1. Humanities General Education Assessment Cycle

IV. Summary of 2007-08 Assessment Activities

Humanities faculty conducted a formal assessment of two student learning outcomes during fall term 2007.

Student Learning Outcome #1: Articulate significant social, literary, and political perspectives found in humanities in such areas as class, ethnicity, gender, sex, and cultural orientation.

The Humanities faculty conducted an analysis of where this outcome is reflected in the curriculum. The mapping of this outcome to humanities courses can be found in Appendix A, Student Learning Outcome-Course Matrix, table A1.

The faculty assessed student projects from ENG 235, American Multicultural Literature, to determine student progress made during the term. Eighteen students completed a sequence of writing and presentation projects. The term project was used to measure

student progress for specific learning criteria, including social perspectives, literary perspectives, political perspectives, class, ethnicity, sex and gender, and cultural orientation. A rubric with a five point scale (excellent-poor) was used to determine student progress.

After analyzing the data, the faculty found that the weakest student performance was student response to ethnic, sex, gender contrasts, and political perspectives. The next time the course is taught, the faculty will present more examples of these contrasts and spend more time revealing how to measure and expose them.

Further analysis revealed the strongest areas of student performance for exposing the importance of class, literary connection, cultural relevance, and broad social perspectives. When students were asked to self reflect on their progress they reported substantial progress in the area of revealing specific incidents that connect them to American multicultural themes found in literature.

Detailed records of this assessment can be found in the department assessment coordinator's notebook.

Student Learning Outcome #2: Produce a significant amount of interpretive and analytical writing using appropriate organization, argument, support, vocabulary, documentation and grammar.

The Humanities faculty conducted an analysis of where this outcome is reflected in the curriculum. The mapping of this outcome to humanities courses can be found in Appendix A, Student Learning Outcome-Course Matrices, table A2.

Student work from HUM 147, Introduction of the Humanities I, was examined to determine student progress during fall term. One hundred ten students completed a number of formal papers during the term, receiving meticulous feedback on their written work. The *Oedipus* essay assignment, given the 6th week, was used to measure student progress on the specific learning objectives listed above. A rubric was used to determine student type (freshmen-senior), as well as a 5 point scale to determine student progress (excellent-missing).

In analyzing the data, the faculty concluded that the weakest part of this SLO is students' inability to support an argument with quotes and/or examples from the text. Surprisingly, juniors ranked the lowest in every category, which may be an anomaly. In addition, students were also weak in the areas of vocabulary, diction and grammar. Since these objectives are not taught in HUM 147, but taught in WR 121 & 122, the faculty formally reported the data results to the Communication department for discussion and possible action.

When students were asked to self reflect on their progress they reported moderate to substantial progress in the area of supporting an argument. This reveals that they are

overestimating their ability in this area, or perhaps, they don't understand fully what support actually means.

The next time a HUM 147, 148 or 149 course is taught, the faculty will place additional emphasis on this area and show student examples of properly supported arguments.

Students enrolled in HUM 147 showed excellent progress in analysis of complex ideas in writing.

Detailed records of all assessment activities can be found in the department assessment coordinator's notebook.

Indirect Assessment Measures:

As an indirect assessment measure, humanities faculty asked students, a number of times, to complete a self appraisal of their perception of progress on the learning objectives.

Additional Assessment of Critical Thinking

To assess mid-point proficiency in critical thinking, student work from Humanities 125: Introduction to Technology, Society and Values was used. Although this course has a freshman prefix, a broad spectrum of students enroll in it. In the five-page assignment students were asked to demonstrate their knowledge of genetically engineered food and to investigate and evaluate some particular aspect of the GE food debate (eg. Labeling of GE food products, cross-pollination, global resistance, and so on). A critical thinking rubric was used to evaluate ability in the areas of 1) identifying the problem or issue, 2) understanding and evaluating concepts, 3) the ability to develop an independent perspective, 4) the ability to identify and examine assumptions, 5) the ability to use evidence accurately and effectively in their analysis, and 6) the ability to recognize and communicate implications.

In analyzing these data, the faculty found that student performance was uneven across all areas, being strong in some and weaker in others. Specifically, students performed well in the area of problem identification (61.7% scoring 3 or 4 on a 4 point scale of proficiency). Students also showed strength in developing an independent perspective. Where students showed the greatest weakness was in the identification and evaluation of assumptions. This may reflect the difficulty in unpacking assumptions – both their own and the authors of the material they use – in such a short paper assignment. Additionally, for this assignment, students were asked to bring in several outside sources to support their arguments. It appears that while using this evidence, they fail to interrogate it fully. Also, it was evident in their assignments, that students often did not recognize their own assumptions. In the future, the in-class exercises, wherein student bring in outside sources to share with their teams will include directions on recognizing the underlying assumptions. Progress in this area will clearly take continual reinforcement over the class.

The relatively low score in using and evaluating evidence (38.3%) is more perplexing. In this assignment, students are required to find and use evidence to support their perspectives. In the context of the paper, they have approximately two double-spaced pages in which to do this. The majority of students do a competent job of this aspect of the assignment, given the concision required by the parameters of the paper. This concision, however, appears to be detrimental when achieving a “proficient or highly proficient” score on the assessment. Most students are assessed at a “some proficiency” level, which states that students “successfully identify data and information that counts as evidence, but fails to thoroughly evaluate its credibility.” Given the parameters of the assignment and the freshman level of the course, this is not an unexpected outcome. In this context, the fact that 38% of the students scored a 3 or 4 in this area is actually very encouraging. To improve this score further, the professor will stress the importance of “rigorously” evaluating the information in discussion and will provide paper excerpts to the class, demonstrating this behavior. Detailed results of this assessment activity can be found in Table 4 of the department assessment coordinator’s notebook.

V. Student Learning Improvement Plan

Student Learning Outcome #1: Articulate significant social, literary, and political perspectives found in humanities in such areas as class, ethnicity, gender, sex, and cultural orientation.

Strengths: Students demonstrated strengths in exposing the importance of class, literary connection, cultural relevance, and broad social perspectives.

Areas needing improvement: Student performance was weakest with regard to ethnic, sex, gender contrasts, and political perspectives.

Action plan: As noted below, the faculty reassessed SLO #1, articulating significant social, literary, and political perspectives found in humanities in such areas as class, ethnicity, gender, sex, and cultural orientation. Overall assessment scores improved substantially over fall term 2007 scores. No further action is required at this time.

Student Learning Outcome #2: Produce a significant amount of interpretive and analytical writing using appropriate organization, argument, support, vocabulary, documentation and grammar.

Strengths: Students demonstrated strength in analysis of complex ideas in writing.

Areas needing improvement: The weakest part of this SLO is students’ inability to support an argument with quotes and/or examples from the text.

Action plan: As noted below, the faculty implemented new teaching strategies with supporting an argument and re-assessed this outcome. Students demonstrated proficiency upon re-assessment. No further action is required at this time.

Additional Assessment of Critical Thinking

Strengths: Lower division students demonstrated acceptable proficiency in identifying the problem or issue, recognizing contexts and stakeholders, formulating a personal perspective and recognizing perspectives of others, and drawing implications or conclusions.

Areas needing improvement: Students demonstrated less than acceptable proficiency in identifying and evaluating assumptions and in identifying and evaluating evidence.

Action plan: With regard to identifying underlying assumptions, the in-class exercises, wherein student bring in outside sources to share with their teams, will include directions on recognizing the underlying assumptions. With regard to identifying and evaluating evidence, the professor will stress the importance of “rigorously” evaluating the information in discussion and will provide paper excerpts to the class, demonstrating this behavior.

VI. Changes Resulting From Assessment

SLO #1: During spring term, 2008, we reassessed SLO #1, articulating significant social, literary, and political perspectives found in humanities in such areas as class, ethnicity, gender, sex, and cultural orientation. Following the winter term 2008 assessment plan, ENG 266 faculty placed more emphasis on the issues of Native American ethnicity. Faculty-led discussions, course readings, and films revealed issues involving the disenfranchisement of native people and the destruction of native cultures within the Indian Boarding School Program, the reservation system, and U.S. government land policy. Students worked in groups to develop their own presentations and written responses to the course material. A rubric was used to determine student progress (exceptional – no apparent progress). Overall assessment scores improved substantially over fall term 2007 scores.

Detailed results of this assessment activity can be found in the department assessment coordinator’s notebook

SLO #2: During winter term, 2008, we reassessed SLO #2, analyzing the students’ ability to appropriately support an argument with quotes and/or examples from the text. Student work from HUM 148, Introduction to the Humanities II, was examined to determine student progress during winter term. Ninety students completed a number of formal papers during the term, receiving meticulous feedback on their written work. The *King Lear/Ran* essay assignment, given the 6th week, was used to specifically measure student progress on the use of support in an analytical paper. A rubric was used to determine student type (freshmen-senior), as well as a 5 point scale to determine student progress (excellent-missing).

Following the fall assessment plan, HUM 148 (winter) faculty placed greater emphasis on how to appropriately support an argument. Faculty led a discussion and provided students with examples of student work which properly supported an analytical argument, using quotes and/or examples from the text. The overall scores improved substantially in every case.

Detailed results of this assessment activity can be found below in Table 2 and also in the department assessment coordinator's notebook.

Term	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Fall '07 Average Results	3.64	3.57	3.14	3.83
Winter '08 Average Results	4	4.41	4.25	4.07
Average Overall Improvement	0.36	0.84	1.11	0.24

Table 2. Humanities SLO #2 Improvement Results Fall 2007 - Winter 2008

Appendix A
Student Learning Outcome-Course Matrices

Student Learning Outcome #1: Articulate significant social, literary, and political perspectives found in humanities in such areas as class, ethnicity, gender, sex, and cultural orientation. Table A1 demonstrates the mapping of this outcome to humanities courses.

Humanities Course	Fall	Winter	Spring
ART 207 Watercolor			
ART 207 Graphic Design			
ART 207 Digital Photography			
ART 220			
ENG 104			
ENG 105			
ENG 106			
ENG 235	X		
ENG 246			
ENG 253			
ENG 254			
ENG 255			
ENG 266			X
ENG 367			
ENG 381	X		
ENG 387	X		
ENG 407			X
HUM 125			
HUM 147	X		
HUM 148		X	
HUM 149			X
HUM 197			
MUS 207			
PHIL 331			

Table A1. Student Learning Outcome #1-Course Matrix

Student Learning Outcome #2: Produce a significant amount of interpretive and analytical writing using appropriate organization, argument, support, vocabulary, documentation and grammar. Table A2 demonstrates the mapping of this outcome to humanities courses.

Humanities Course	Fall	Winter	Spring
ART 207 Watercolor			
ART 207 Graphic Design			
ART 207 Digital Photography			
ART 220			
ENG 104			
ENG 105			
ENG 106			
ENG 235			
ENG 246			
ENG 253	X		
ENG 254		X	
ENG 255			X
ENG 266			
ENG 367		X	
ENG 381	X		
ENG 387			
ENG 407			
HUM 125			
HUM 147	X		
HUM 148		X	
HUM 149			X
HUM 197			
MUS 207			
PHIL 331			

Table A2. Student Learning Outcome #2-Course Matrix