

Radford University's Core Curriculum Assessment Plan

Introduction

As part of its charge, the Core Curriculum Advisory Committee (CCAC) is responsible for the development of an overall assessment plan for the Core Curriculum program at Radford University. The following assessment plan will begin in Fall 2014.

Background

The assessment plan for the Core Curriculum program will use embedded assessment measures to determine the extent to which students in Radford University's Core Curriculum program are meeting the program's learning outcomes. The two aspects of the plan include one which outlines the specifics for the CORE A program and the other that outlines the specifics for all other areas in Radford University's Core Curriculum.

The University Core A program will be assessed via required student assignments in the five core courses (CORE 101, 102, 201, and 202 and HNRS 103). For learning outcomes related to written communication, critical thinking, and information literacy, designated works will be collected from the faculty teaching the CORE A courses, and a sample will be scored by external raters with faculty-designed rubrics. For outcomes related to oral communication, faculty members teaching the courses will rate their students via a rubric. The Assessment Office will use the ratings to determine the extent to which students are meeting the established outcomes.

The rest of the Core Curriculum program and outcomes will be assessed according to methods developed by departments appropriate to the area outcomes covered in their courses. Programs will develop assessment plans for their Core Curriculum courses, collect data based upon that plan, and report their findings to the Office of Academic Assessment and CCAC. CCAC will examine all of the findings and submit a report on the state of the Core Curriculum to the Faculty Senate and the Provost according to the timeline in Table 1.

Why Do We Assess Student Learning in Core Curriculum courses?

Core curriculum or general education assessment is required by our regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), and the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV). Moreover, assessing the extent to which students are learning what we say they are learning is a natural part of the teaching-learning process and necessary for institutions to improve their programs.

Our regional accrediting body (SACSCOC) requires that institutions identify expected outcomes for its general education program, assess the extent to which students achieve these competencies and make improvements based on the assessment results. Additionally, SCHEV requires that state-institutions within Virginia measure and report student learning in six core competency areas: written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, technology/information literacy, scientific reasoning, and quantitative reasoning.

The goal of the assessment program is to examine the Core Curriculum program and to determine if students are learning what Radford University deems important. Assessment results are not intended to be used:

- To evaluate any faculty member in regards to their teaching
- For promotion or tenure decisions
- For evaluation of any School or Department

Assessment Guidelines

CORE A

CORE A courses will be assessed as specified in the above section via required student assignments in five core courses (CORE 101, 102, 201, and 202 and HNRS 103, 201, 202). External readers will evaluate written assignments, and faculty members will evaluate oral communication assignments.

Other Core Curriculum Areas

This plan relies upon direct, course-embedded methods to assess learning outcomes. Departments will develop assessment measures designed specifically for the course. Assessments should be part of the course, and every student in all sections should be assessed.

Student learning must be directly assessed; a direct assessment objectively measures achievement of the student learning outcomes. In addition, the student learning measure should be at the cognitive level specified in the outcome. The most common forms of direct assessment are rubric-oriented assessments for writing assignments and other written works or projects, objective test items, and portfolio assessments. Other methods may be used by programs but must be approved by the departments and CCAC.

Other Requirements

There are several other requirements for course-embedded assessment. First, assessment measures must be required of all students in the course and consist of graded components of the course so they are taken seriously. Second, all learning outcomes for the area must be assessed. If a course falls within more than one area in the Core Curriculum, all outcomes in both areas need to be assessed. Third, the same assessment method must be used across all sections of a course.

Stages of Assessment

The process for completing the Core Curriculum Assessment for Areas 5 through 11 includes the following stages:

Stage 1: A plan for each course will be submitted to CCAC

A plan for each course will be submitted to CCAC. This plan will include information about the course (see Appendix A). If using objective test measure, include test questions and scoring key. If using rubric-oriented assessment include a description of the assignment and the rubric used for scoring.

Stage 2: CCAC reviews assessment plans

In the second stage of the assessment the CCAC will review the plan and may suggest modifications when appropriate.

Stage 3: Data is collected and submitted to the Office of Academic Assessment.

Departments, schools, and programs will collect, analyze, and report assessment data to the Office of Academic Assessment as specified in Appendix B. The data should be reported in terms of percentages and number of students at the levels of *not competent*, *competent*, and *highly competent*. For each outcome, the numbers and percentages of students falling into each category should be reported. Based on the data, each reporting unit (department, school, or program) will provide a written account of the degree to which the outcome has been met and what can be done to improve the result. The target approved by CCAC is that 70% of the students will rate as competent or highly competent.

Stage 4: CCAC evaluates data and submits an area report

The Office of Academic Assessment will provide a summary report to the CCAC, who will generate a report for each area, and present this information to university stakeholders. This report will include recommendations for area improvement based upon assessment findings. CCAC will identify discrepancies within areas and make recommendations to the university, administration, and the faculty senate. CCAC will also work the Office of Assessment and the departments on improvement plans for those courses not meeting the outcomes.

Stage 5: Improvements are made based on assessment findings

Departments, schools, and programs will address recommendations for improving student learning based upon assessment findings.

Stage 6: Core Curriculum Final Report is submitted

Upon completion of one full cycle of assessment, university-wide discussions will be held to determine if any overall structural changes need to be made to the Core Curriculum program.

Table 1. Timeline for Entire Core Curriculum Program

University Core A	Fall 2014	Spring 2015	Fall 2015	Spring 2016			Fall
CORE 101 and HNRS 103	Works collected from courses	Rubric ratings conducted	Results reviewed and changes implemented as indicated	Results reviewed and changes implemented as indicated	Works collected from courses		
CORE 102		Works collected from courses, including Wintermester 14-15 and Summer 2015	Rubric ratings conducted	Results reviewed and changes implemented as indicated	Results reviewed and changes implemented as indicated	Works collected from courses	
CORE 201 and HNRS 201			Works collected from courses, including Wintermester 15-16 and Summer 2016	Rubric ratings conducted	Results reviewed and changes implemented as indicated	Results reviewed and changes implemented as indicated	
CORE 202 and HNRS 202				Works collected from courses, including Wintermester 15-16 and Summer 2016	Rubric ratings conducted	Results reviewed and changes implemented as indicated	
Timeline for Areas 5 through 11 (with course and area revision to take place in the alternate year)							
Areas 5-11	Fall 2014	Spring 2015	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017 and beyond: Continuation of cycle	
Areas 5, 6, 7 and 8: Mathematical Sciences, Natural Sciences, Humanities, and Visual and Performing Arts	Preparation of assessment plans	Data collection to begin no earlier than Wintermester 2014-2015 with subsequent assessment to be conducted in academic years starting with an even year.	Revisions to area and courses as indicated		Data collection begins again for the 2016-2017 academic year		
Area 9, 10, 11, and alternative areas of Health and Wellness and Foreign Languages			Data collection to take place in 2015-2016 with subsequent assessment to be conducted in academic years starting with an odd year; includes data for Wintermester 15-16 and Summer 2016		Revisions to area and courses as indicated Data collection begins again for the 2017-2018 academic year		

Appendix A: Detailed Assessment Plan Example as it should be submitted by Department or School for Courses in Areas 5 through 11, Health and Wellness and Foreign Languages

Radford University: Core Curriculum Assessment Plan

Course Title and Number: _____ Date: _____

Department Contact Person* (Name, Email, and Phone Number):

This course is approved for core curriculum credit in the following areas (check all that apply*):

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5: Mathematical Science | <input type="checkbox"/> 8: Visual & Performing Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> 11: Global Perspectives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6: Natural Sciences | <input type="checkbox"/> 9: Social & Behavioral Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Languages |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7: Humanities | <input type="checkbox"/> 10: U.S. Perspectives | <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Wellness |

* Note: If a course is approved for core curriculum credit in more than one area, an assessment plan must be completed for each area when the area comes under review.

For the past three semesters in which this course was taught please give the following pieces of information:

	<u>Semester / Year</u>	<u>Number of Sections</u>	<u>Estimated Number of Students</u>
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____

Please provide the following information regarding the assessment plan for the Core Curriculum course designated above. (PLEASE NOTE: All outcomes for an area must be assessed.)

Example: Social and Behavioral Science Course 100

Outcome 1: Learning Outcome #1

A. How will you be assessing students on this outcome?

- Short answer / essay
- Objective items (multiple choice, fill-in the blank, etc.)
- Other: Please explain in the space provide below

B. Please provide / attach the questions or assignments **you will be using** to assess the students. Be sure to include the correct answers to the objectives questions and the rubric being used to evaluate.

C. **IF**, you have selected to use a different methodology please provide a detailed description of what you will be doing and examples or assignments or assessment items.

Outcome 2: Learning Outcome #2

A. How will you be assessing students on this outcome?

- Short answer / essay
- Objective items (multiple choice, fill-in the blank, etc.)
- Other: Please explain in the space provide below

B. Please provide / attach the questions or assignments **you will be using** to assess the students. Be sure to include the correct answers to the objectives questions and the rubric being used to evaluate.

C. **IF**, you have selected to use a different methodology please provide a detailed description of what you will be doing and examples or assignments or assessment items.

