

2004-2005 Assessment of Baccalaureate Competencies

Presented by: The General Education Advisory Committee

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February, 2006

Abstract

The 2004-2005 graduating class participated in a rich array of discipline capstone experiences that enabled them to demonstrate the four baccalaureate competencies. Students generally met faculty members' expectations in the four areas; however, some programs are pursuing changes to their rubrics and their capstone courses to enhance the experience for students and to make the rubrics more specific to the student performance.



Introduction

In the University of Cincinnati's General Education Program, faculty assess learning by evaluating student achievement of the four Baccalaureate Competencies: Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Knowledge Integration, and Social Responsibility. This assessment of student learning takes place within the program/major Capstone where faculty use discipline-specific rubrics to measure student achievement of these four competencies. Data produced by this process will, over time, yield meaningful information on student learning, achievement of the Baccalaureate Competencies, and the effectiveness of the unit Capstone. This information stays within the unit for the relevant curriculum committee to consider methods of improvement. Each year, faculty who teach the Capstone will also use the data to answer some brief questions for the General Education Advisory Committee to guide assessment of the General Education Program.

Results

All students who entered the University beginning Fall 2001 and graduated in 2005 with a baccalaureate degree completed the entire General Education Program. The following report details findings from assessment of the baccalaureate competencies as measured in the capstone courses/experiences of the graduating students.

College	Percentage of Programs submitting data	Programs not submitting data
CECH	100%	None
CoE	No data due until 2006	
CoB	100%	None
A&S	50%	African American Studies, Anthropology, Asian Studies, Classics, English, Geology, German, Math, Philosophy, Psychology, Women's Studies
CCM	100%	None
DAAP	89%	Digital Design
Nursing	100%	None
SSW	100%	None
CAHS	100%	None
CAS	100%	None



Summary

“ Assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning.

It involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance.

Assessment helps us create a shared academic culture dedicated to assuring and improving the quality of higher education.” (AAHE Bulletin, November 1995).

The 2004-2005 graduating class participated in a rich array of discipline capstone experiences that enabled them to demonstrate the four baccalaureate competencies. Such experiences included undertaking original research projects, major research papers, field work, construction of portfolios, clinical projects, design projects, senior showcase concerts, management of theatre productions, student teaching, senior recitals and internships.

Since this was the first round of assessment of student learning, this data is considered baseline. Students generally met faculty members' expectations in the four areas; however, some programs are pursuing changes to their rubrics and their capstone courses to enhance the experience for students and to make the rubrics more specific to the student performance. Specific comments are listed below.

Social Responsibility

Many faculty reported needing to think more about the inclusion of this competency and its evaluation. Some faculty members will focus on integrating a service learning component into the capstone to better integrate the concept of social responsibility. Others will redesign the capstone to include a reflective piece that enables the students to focus on the broader implications of their project.

Knowledge Integration

Most comments centered on the need to work on ways to more effectively, and explicitly, challenge students to integrate knowledge acquired outside the major into their capstone project.

Critical Thinking

Faculty were generally pleased with how this was demonstrated and measured. One department will redesign its capstone to ensure the use of primary sources and another will enhance the performance based nature of the capstone by requiring the students to reflect on their learning.

Effective Communication

This competency is broad in scope and a number of faculty expressed a need to be more specific about what aspects they wanted to focus on measuring in the capstone experience. Some stated that they would redesign the capstone to focus more on group work and yet others commented on a redesign that would encourage students to use technology more appropriately.

Next Steps

Having successfully completed the first round of assessment, the current academic year (2005-2006) offers an opportunity for subsequent assessment. As graduating students undertake their capstone experience, it is time for programs to again collect and analyze data, and to examine these results to confirm whether learning expectations have been met as well as to investigate strategies that could lead to improvement. This commitment to student learning ensures academic excellence and highlights the quality of a UC undergraduate degree.