

**Assessment Plan for
University Core Curriculum Category A**
Revised October 2002

Category Assessment Committee Members: Robert West (Communications), Judith Townsend (Math), Martha Smith (English), David Ritterskamp (Math), Karen Bishop (English).

I. Purpose of Category A Assessment

To determine how and to what extent courses approved for a University Core Curriculum (UCC) category are meeting the category's specific goals, in addition to the two overarching goals for all categories: critical thinking and information processing. Category A, specifically, is defined as *The Mind: Enhancement of Cognitive Abilities* and requires 12-13 hours total distributed as follows: Composition/Speech (9 hours) and Mathematics (3-4 hours).

II. Goals and Objectives

What follows are course goals and objectives for each discipline represented in Category A:

Mathematics

Students should achieve proficiency in algebraic skills and learn to apply mathematical techniques to solve problems. They should be able to interpret information and data presented in numerical, graphical, or statistical form, and convey this knowledge to others.

The core curriculum classes that are designed to meet this requirement are:

Math 111 (College Algebra)
Math 108 (Survey of Math)

Students may take either class to meet this requirement, but the majority take Math 111 because it is accepted to fulfill the math requirement in all majors, while Math 108 is generally only accepted in Liberal Arts and Health Professions majors.

In addition, Math 204 is accepted to meet the requirement for Elementary Education majors. The following information gives a breakdown of the number of students completing these three classes in the fall/spring semesters of 2001:

	Number	Percentage
Math 111	1,034	68%
Math 108	258	17%
Math 204	232	15%
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Total	1,524	100%

Speech

Category A represents the medieval trivium (grammar, rhetoric and logic) and forms a base for many of the other courses in the UCC. It is important for students to be competent in Category A areas for success in many other subject areas. Students are offered a choice of SPCH 101, Introduction to Speech, or SPCH 107, Interpersonal Communication. Both courses promote oral expression, listening, organizing ideas and

critical thinking skills. Both courses also require students to research topics and that, almost by definition, requires them to evaluate both primary and secondary sources.

Speech 101 courses require both expository and persuasive speeches. In teaching students to prepare the speeches, attention is given to organization and argumentation. In SPCH 101, there are typically sections that deal with evaluation of information, ethical bases for those evaluations. The information that is evaluated is from research sources as well as evaluating the speeches of students. The practices encourage interpretation, synthesis, etc.

Speech 107 addresses the communication of information (exposition) and persuasion in an interpersonal context. In SPCH 107, sections of the course deal with the same topics mentioned for 101 with emphasis on dyadic relationships instead of public presentation.

Composition

The Rhetoric and Composition Program strives to teach students how to become effective communicators and critical thinkers and how to use language creatively and coherently within a broad spectrum of communities. English 101-Rhetoric and Composition I: Critical Thinking, and English 201: Rhetoric and Composition II: Argumentation are the two English courses in Category A.

English 101 is the first-year course in rhetoric and composition specifically designed to support the University Core Curriculum goals of critical thinking and effective communication. English 101 focuses on thinking as a process of examining and developing knowledge and as a process that can be improved through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Most sections of English 101 are scheduled once a week in a computer lab.

English 201 is the second course in the sequence of composition courses that focuses on researched writing and argumentation. In this course, students investigate questions that are at issue for them and their audience and for which they do not already have answers. Argumentation in the context of this course means the study and analysis of claims and evidence rather than writing to win. Most sections of English 201 are scheduled once a week in a computer lab.

III. Data Gathering

Prior to the actual collection of data (Fall 2002), each member of the committee will attain the necessary departmental approvals required regarding the distribution and use of questionnaires and other instruments designed to elicit responses concerning faculty perceptions of learning and student performance.

Mathematics

To assess whether the core curriculum classes in Math achieve this goal, the following plan will be implemented:

1. A departmental final is given in Math 111. This final will be reviewed on a sample basis to determine whether the goal of the requirement was met. Problems will be broken down based on the following objectives and will be analyzed to determine the percentage of students who met the objectives at a 70% level *.

- a. algebraic skills
 - b. problem-solving skills
 - c. interpretation of numerical information/data
 - d. interpretation of graphical information/data
 - e. interpretation of statistical information/data
2. Classes in which students use their mathematical skill required in the core curriculum, Math 111 and Math 108 will be identified and professors who teach those classes will be surveyed to determine their opinions on whether the students have achieved those skills listed in **number 1, items a through e**, as they apply to the class the professor teaches and demonstrate the ability to convey this knowledge to others.
 3. Presently Doris Mohr and Judy Wells are pre-testing and post-testing Math 104 and Math 204 students using a basic math inventory exam. They plan to analyze the results of the pre-test and post-test scores, as well as look at any changes in the students' performances from the spring 2002 semester and the fall 2002 semester. During the fall 2002 semester, students will receive instruction utilizing the enhanced teaching materials developed as part of the Teaching Enhancement Award. This award has provided for the development of curricular supplements in three primary areas.

Speech

In order to measure whether or not these courses are fulfilling their mission, we suggest the following tests:

- A. Many students say they are in the courses only because of the UCC requirement but recognize that good communication skills are important. As a result, they form expectations for the course. We suggest measuring whether or not those expectations are being met (see appendix B).
- B. Communication skills are important in many other courses in the university. In order to determine the level of preparedness, we recommend surveying/interviewing teachers of upper level courses in every school in the university.
- C. An extension of the above process would be to interview businesses where USI graduates are employed and determine if former students have adequate communication skills. Likewise, former students could also be interviewed/surveyed to determine if they think their skills are adequate.
- D. A review of the syllabi should be done as part of this assessment process and become an ongoing practice to determine if the courses are addressing their UCC mission.

Composition

The composition program will examine the following data sets to assess the level to which composition courses fulfill the core requirements in Category A:

- A. Portfolios are used by most composition faculty to trace students' progress through the writing process. Specifically, a random sampling of portfolios from both of the courses, English 101 and English 102, will be collected and analyzed to determine to what extent students have: (1) developed a composing technique; (2) demonstrated a rhetorical awareness by writing in different genres for a variety of audiences and purposes; (3) attained some proficiency in focusing, developing and organizing texts; (4) mastered documentation and other bibliographic skills; and finally, the extent to which students have (5) grasped the notion of revising.
- B. Syllabi for those teaching composition are already archived and will function as an artifact for assessment. Beginning Fall 2002, the composition program will also randomly collect sample written assignments that may be considered in part.
- C. Interviews will be conducted with faculty teaching composition in computer-mediated environments. [Note: As of Fall 2002, all sections of English 201 have sessions scheduled in the computer lab. Also, approximately 30% of 101 sections have scheduled sessions in the computer lab.]

IV. Assessment Timeline

The committee has decided that data collection and analysis will occur beginning Fall 2002 through Spring 2003. Speech has already begun data collection which will continue through 2003 as needed and includes pre-testing questions for the survey.

V. Other Pertinent Information

The committee will consider ways to include as part of the assessment questions or materials to elicit a sense of the integration of technology (or lack) in courses in category A.

VI. Appendices

- Appendix A: Draft of questions for Faculty Interviews (Math)
- Appendix B: Student Survey (Communications)
- Appendix C: Protocol for Upper-Level Communications Courses
- Appendix D: Rubric for Portfolio Evaluation (Composition)
- Appendix E: Draft of Interview Questions for Faculty Teaching
Composition in the Computer Lab

Appendix A

Interviews of faculty—Some classes require that the Math core be fulfilled as a prerequisite and some programs require that a specific math class be used to fill the Core requirement. To see if our classes are preparing students in the desired ways, we plan to interview faculty members who teach courses in which satisfying the Math Core is required. These interviews would seek to discover if the students are entering with the proper math background and if these faculty members believe the Core objectives are being met.

Faculty to interview would include those who teach

1. Science
2. Business
3. Education (M104)

Possible Questions:

1. Do you feel your students are entering your course with the proper mathematical background?
2. Have your students exhibited well-developed critical thinking skills over the course of the semester?
3. What skills do your students lack the most that their Core class should prepare them with?
4. How would your class change (curriculum, focus, pedagogy, etc.) if the math core was not a prerequisite?
5. Do your students display the ability to convey mathematical concepts to others when necessary?

Appendix B

Name (Optional)_____

Rank order the top five areas in which you felt improvement in your communication skills. (1=most improved)

Speech apprehension_____

Persuasion_____

Articulation_____

Conversation_____

Fluency_____

Evaluating_____

Confidence/poise_____

Research_____

Small group work_____

Delivery_____

Organization_____

Other_____

Specify_____

Listening_____

1. Did you enroll in Spch 101 only because it is required? _____
2. Do you think Public Speaking is an important skill? _____
3. What parts of the course should be emphasized more:
4. Which parts should be emphasized less:
5. Should Spch 101 be required? _____

Class year: Fr So Jr Sr Grad

Age_____

Gender_____

Appendix C

Quantitative and Qualitative Protocol for teachers of upper-level courses (300/400 level) that involve student presentation

Part I. Rate student preparation in the following areas using a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 representing insufficient and 5 being excellent.

1. Content:

Research skills _____

Critical Analysis_____

Logical Organization_____

2. Delivery:

Physical Delivery_____

(Includes posture, gestures, eye contact, comporment)

Vocal Delivery_____

(Appropriate rate, pitch, volume, articulation,
vocalized pauses)

3. Audience Analysis:

Appropriateness of vocabulary_____

4. Overall Communication effectiveness_____

Part II. Please share your impressions of the communication competence of students' performances in your classes.

Appendix D

Portfolio Rubric

Students' reflective statements (as part of the portfolio) that clarify task responses and explain strategies/processes will be considered in the evaluation of portfolios, in addition to the following criteria:

- (4) An *Outstanding Portfolio* contains evidence of
 - Superior understanding of resources as demonstrated in task responses
 - Strong connections between ideas and tasks
 - Fresh and/or insightful conclusions
 - Creative approach and individual perspective
 - Writer's message clearly unimpeded by errors in conventions and mechanics

- (3) An *Acceptable Portfolio* contains evidence of
 - Clear understanding of resources demonstrated in task responses
 - Obvious connections between ideas and tasks
 - Logical conclusions
 - Clear control of language, vocabulary, and sentence structure
 - Some creativity of approach and individual perspective
 - Writer's message unimpeded by errors in conventions and mechanics

- (2) An *Emerging Portfolio* contains evidence of
 - Basic understanding of resources in task responses
 - Limited connections between ideas and tasks
 - Facts restated in attempt to draw own conclusions
 - Limited control of language, vocabulary, and sentence structure
 - Little creativity of approach and/or individual perspective
 - Writer's message that may be inhibited by frequent errors in conventions or mechanics

- (1) An *Underdeveloped Portfolio* contains evidence of
 - Little or no understanding of resources and/or tasks
 - Little or no attempt at connecting ideas and/or tasks
 - Facts copied or restated rather than drawing own conclusions
 - Lack of control of language, vocabulary, and/or sentence structure
 - Lack of creativity of approach and individual perspective
 - Writer's message that may be impaired by frequent errors in mechanics and structure

- (0) A *Nonscorable Portfolio* does not contain enough completed tasks to score. To be scored a portfolio must contain at least four tasks, including tasks four and six.

Appendix E

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Interviews of faculty teaching Composition in Computer Labs

(1) Identify the last composition course(s) you taught in the computer lab and indicate the semester during which the course(s) was taught? How many times per week/semester was the class scheduled to meet in the lab?

(2) What do you consider an ideal number of sessions to be scheduled in the lab for a class that meets twice a week? Three times a week?

- Once a week
- Every class session
- # of sessions per semester

(3) Identify the specific ways you use technology to support the shared course goals for English composition (choose as many as apply).

- Invention
- Drafting
- Peer editing
- Online research
- Conferencing
- Online discussion
- Responding to student writing
- Revising

(4) Which computer applications or software are you currently using in your composition courses? Check or write in as many as apply.

- Word
- Excel
- Publisher
- Frontpage
- PowerPoint
- Netscape Composer
- Netscape/Explorer
- Blackboard
- Campus Pipeline
- Textbook CD-Rom
- Other _____
- Other _____

(5) Identify the following research skills that are currently being taught in your composition class with the support of technology:

- Citing and documenting sources
- Research skills (paraphrase, quote)
- Analyze data/ideas/arguments
- Evaluating sources
- Synthesizing information from multiple sources
- Correcting grammar/syntax/mechanics