

Assessment Plan for Category D: Synthesis

I. First Charge – Survey the Category’s current status: its goals and objectives, and the courses and methods currently used to fulfill them

A. Goals and Objectives

In order to survey the goals and objectives, the following data will be gathered:

1. In order to determine if goals and objectives are clearly stated on syllabi, all syllabi for synthesis courses taught during Spring Semester, 2001 will be examined.
2. In order to determine their views on the appropriateness of the Category’s goals and objectives, faculty teaching synthesis courses will be interviewed by members of the Category D Assessment Committee.

B. Courses and Methods

In order to survey courses and methods, the following data will be gathered:

1. In order to determine how synthesis courses are attempting to meet the goals and objectives of the Category (and critical thinking and information processing goals), interviews with faculty teaching synthesis courses will be conducted by members of the Category D Assessment Committee.
2. Faculty teaching synthesis courses will be asked to provide copies of assignments that are intended to meet relevant goals and objectives. The relevance of the assignments to particular goals and objectives will be discussed during faculty interviews.
3. During the last two weeks of the semester, students enrolled in synthesis courses will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire will include questions about students’ perceptions regarding the appropriateness of the number, scheduling, and subject matter of synthesis courses.

II. SECOND CHARGE – Access the effectiveness of the current program in meeting the Category’s objectives.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the current program, the following data will be gathered:

1. The student questionnaire will include questions pertaining to the following:
 - a. Perceived clarity of goals and objectives
 - b. Perceived relevance of assignments to the goals and objectives of Category D
 - c. Perceived relevance of assignments to information processing and critical thinking goals (see Appendix A for a preliminary list of items to be included in a critical thinking instrument)
2. During interviews conducted by members of the Category Assessment Committee, instructors teaching synthesis courses will be invited to discuss: (1) how they clearly communicate goals and objectives to students, (2) how their assignments are relevant to the goals and objectives of Category D, and (3) how their assignments are relevant to furthering the goal of developing students’ information processing and critical thinking skills.
3. During the faculty interviews, instructors will be given an opportunity to discuss the availability of resources (e.g., software, periodicals, lab equipment) that enable students to meet the goals of the core curriculum.

III. Preliminary Recommendation

It is recommended that all faculty members proposing to teach a synthesis courses be invited to attend a developmental workshop. The workshop should provide information about the goals and objectives of synthesis courses and the variety of ways these goals and objectives might be achieved. The establishment and management of the workshops should be the responsibility of the Director of the Core Curriculum.

Appendix A

Sample of Items to be Included in the Critical Thinking Inventory

To what extent did this course teach you to...

- (a) Distinguish the central from the peripheral?
- (b) Differentiate between opinion, theory, and fact?
- (c) Formulate questions and defines problems?
- (d) Differentiate conceptual from operational definitions?
- (e) Interpret verbal statements or claims?
- (f) Interpret numerical data?
- (g) Interpret graphical or pictorial information?
- (h) Apply concepts or principles to a given situation?
- (i) Deduce and infer conclusions?
- (j) Compare and contrast related statements, claims, or concepts?
- (k) Analyze possible causes of a problem and possible consequences of a proposed solution to the problem?
- (l) Make logical and/or empirically based hypothetical predictions?
- (m) Illustrate with an example?
- (n) Identify possible solutions to a problem?