

# The Development of an Assessment Process for a New General Education Curriculum (or, Building a Plane while in Flight)

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AICUP ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

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# Authors/CCC Members

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# Starting Point: Developing a concept for a new Gen Ed Curriculum

- Faculty charged by administration to determine what we ideally wanted students to learn, setting aside practical realities or constraints
- The process would be highly collaborative, involving all faculty
- Discussion would avoid emphasis on disciplines to minimize territoriality
- Reconceptualizing could reduce the separation between Gen. Ed. and majors
- The curriculum would apply to every student on campus
- Some kind of oversight or verification process needed to correct the “drift” that had occurred in the old Core Curriculum
- Learning goals and even some curricular elements continue to evolve

# Developing the Central Curriculum step by step

## **Year 1: Develop University Learning Goals**

→ Summer Task force: Develop 3 models and merge into 1

## **Year 2: Present model to faculty**

→ Develop learning goals for each area of the Central Curriculum

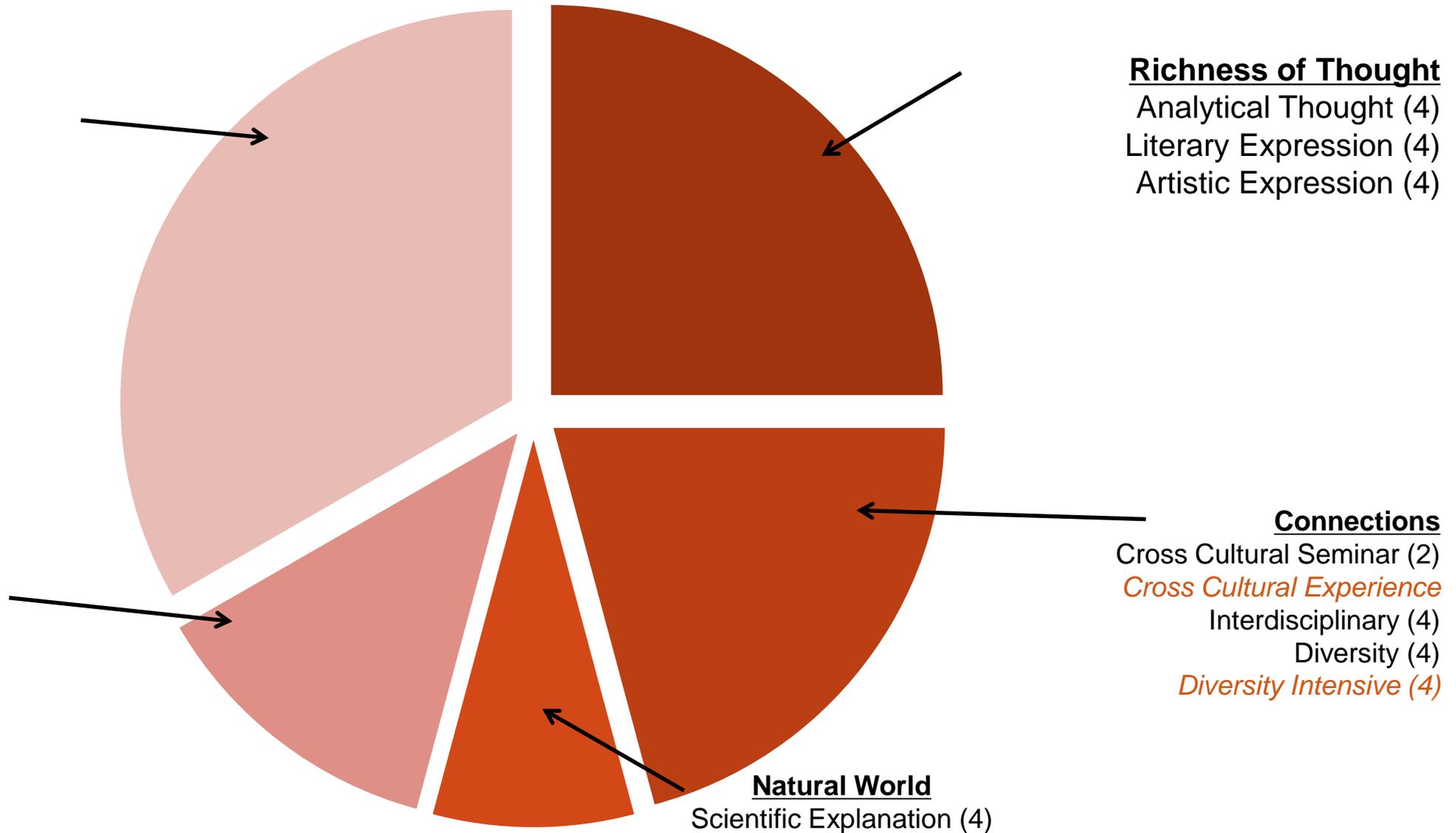
## **Year 3: Faculty propose courses**

→ Establish a committee to govern the Central Curriculum

## **Year 4: Implement Central Curriculum for first-year students**

→ Faculty begin to develop cross-disciplinary assessment tools

# Central Curriculum



## Human Interaction

Social Interaction (4)  
Historical Perspective (4)  
Ethics (4)  
*Ethics Intensive (4)*  
Foreign Language (0, 4, 8)

## Intellectual Skills

Perspectives (2)  
Writing and Thinking (4)  
*Writing Intensive (8)*  
*Team Intensive (4)*  
*Oral Intensive (4)*

## Natural World

Scientific Explanation (4)

## Richness of Thought

Analytical Thought (4)  
Literary Expression (4)  
Artistic Expression (4)

## Connections

Cross Cultural Seminar (2)  
*Cross Cultural Experience*  
Interdisciplinary (4)  
Diversity (4)  
*Diversity Intensive (4)*

# Committee on the Central Curriculum

## Faculty Handbook Description of Function of CCC:

2.7.4.9 FUNCTION: To maintain and assess the integrity of the Central Curriculum. To assess periodically the degree to which the student experience of the Central Curriculum as a whole meets the University Learning Goals. To review the Learning Goals and other criteria included in the Course Proposal Checklists for the Central Curriculum as needed and bring to the faculty any recommendations for changes. To ensure that courses approved for the Central Curriculum maintain fidelity to the requirements enumerated on the Course Proposal Checklists. To support faculty who teach or wish to teach in the Central Curriculum. To create and maintain the Central Curriculum Handbook in consultation with the Registrar. To educate new faculty and the University community on the history, the purpose, the operation, and the value of the Central Curriculum. To coordinate with the Curriculum Committee the periodic review of each requirement within the Central Curriculum.

# Optimism

We had learning goals

Steering committee model that was already working for some areas of the curriculum

Areas of the curriculum which were closely tied to individual departments

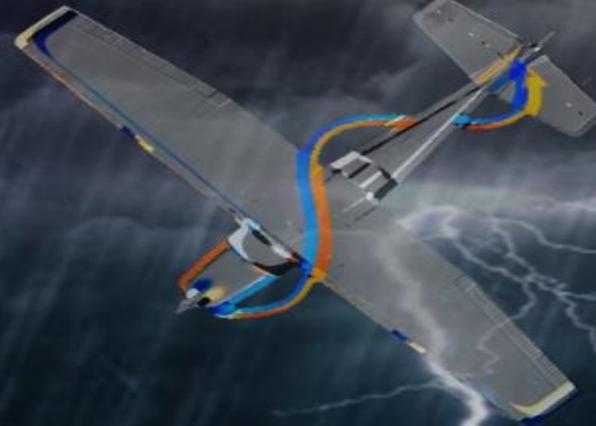
Affinity groups and faculty area coordinators

5 year cycle through all 18 areas of the CC

# Reality

This was going to be harder than we expected. We had to build the (assessment) plane while it was flying and what we were doing wasn't working.

We had 18 areas of the Central Curriculum and 72 learning goals to assess and we were starting over.



# Righting the plane



Improve assessment schedule

Improve committee membership

# CCC Membership

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## Original

- 5 elected members
- 2 *ex officio* members

## Improved

- 7 elected members
- 2 *ex officio* members

# Assessment Timeline

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## Original timeline

- 3-4 areas assessed all their learning goals each year
- 5 year cycle to cover each area of the CC

## Revised timeline

- 9 areas assessed one/two learning goals each year
- 2 year cycle to cover each area of the CC

# Current Process

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9 CCC members & 9 areas assessed each year

Each CCC member shepherds an area through the assessment process

Annual workshop during Opening Week

Coordinates development of measures/rubrics

Sends reminders and collects samples

Reviews syllabi for learning goals

Organizes the scoring of samples

Writes the report for the CCC committee

# Examples

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# Writing Intensive Example

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## Course Goals Shared by All Writing Intensive Classes

1. Employ rhetorical and organizational strategies appropriate for the assignments and discipline.
2. Critically select and integrate sources and/or ideas.
3. Learn from and respond to criticism of rhetorical and organizational strategies in their own writing.

# Writing Intensive Example

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## Course Goals Shared by All Writing Intensive Classes

1. Employ rhetorical and organizational strategies appropriate for the assignments and discipline.
- 2. Critically select and integrate sources and/or ideas.**
3. Learn from and respond to criticism of rhetorical and organizational strategies in their own writing.

4--(Excellent)	3--(Strong)	2--(Acceptable)	1—(Poor)
Sources/ideas are well chosen and appropriate	Sources/ideas are well chosen	Some sources are well chosen, but some are missing	Few sources/ideas, or inappropriate to project
Sources consistently, creatively, and deeply engaged with to create new ideas	Sources/ideas purposefully engaged with, but imperfectly or incompletely	Sources/ideas are used, but rather mechanically, without engaging in nuance or creating new ideas	Source/idea use is vague or misunderstands the text/tradition/form
Source framing, when appropriate, clearly connects to or contrasts with student idea	Source framing usually clearly connects to or contrasts with student idea	Source framing rarely connects to or contrasts with student idea	Sources aren't framed; no introduction or explanation

# Send reminders and collect samples

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Dear Writing Intensive Colleagues,

As you probably recall, Writing Intensive courses are being assessed this year. Last semester, we created and agreed upon a rubric, which I'm attaching to this email. Here is our process.

1. Please choose an assignment from your class that addresses the Writing Intensive course goal, "Critically select and integrate sources and ideas."
2. Randomly select a set of student papers from that assignment that represent 20% of the class: I suggest every fifth student on your roster.
3. Use the rubric to evaluate each paper in your sample set.
4. Send me your scores (Paper 1=??; Paper 2=??; Paper 3=?? Etc).

Thank you for participating in this assessment project! (If you've already sent me your materials, thank you very much, and I'm sorry for the extra email.)

Betsy

# Syllabus Review

Susquehanna University mySU ▶ Provost ▶ Syllabi Collection

## Syllabi Collection

Find courses with...

Term:

Course Number:  Ex. PHIL-101-01 or PHIL (all philosophy courses) or PHIL-101 (all sections of PHIL-101)

Course Title:

Instructor:  Ex. Smith, John

Course Type:

Cross-Listed with:  Ex. PHIL-101-01 or PHIL (all philosophy courses) or PHIL-101 (all sections of PHIL-101)

# Syllabus Review

Central Curriculum Course Syllabus Survey: Fall 2014-Spring 2015							
Central Curriculum Area	1	2	3	4	5		Total
	# of Syllabi with Area Learning Goals	# of Syllabi with Some or Vague Area Learning Goals	# of Syllabi with No Area Learning Goals	# of Syllabi with No Learning Goals	No syllabus on file		
Perspectives	24	3	0	2	9		38
Scientific Explanations							
Team Intensive							
Writing and Thinking							

# Scoring for Writing Intensive

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Started with 2 readers – not sustainable, so moved to 1

Faculty scored their own samples according to our agreed-upon rubric and reported scores to the area's assessment shepherd

Assessment shepherd recorded sample scores for use in report to area faculty and the Central Curriculum Committee

# Writing the Report--Template

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**Vital statistics: the area, dates, and goal assessed**

**Assessment Plan**

**Participation**

**Results**

**Discussion**

**Future Actions**

# Writing the Report—the two most important sections

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## **Discussion**

- *Potential improvements to the process.*
- *Potential improvements to the rubric.*
- *Potential improvements to the measure used.*
- *Strongest part of the process.*

## **Future Actions**

# Committee Response

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**To: Faculty teaching Writing Intensive courses in the Central Curriculum**

**From: Committee on the Central Curriculum**

**Re: 2013-14 Assessment activities—Learning Goal 2**

**Date: November 19, 2014**

The committee appreciates the organization and thoughtful analysis of your report on the assessment of Learning Goal #2 for Writing Intensive courses (Critically select and integrate sources and ideas). We felt that the rubric you developed had clear and specific descriptions for each category. The committee also appreciated the detail with which the process and results were explained, since it provided a good evaluation of the assessment process.

Thank you for your contribution to the Central Curriculum assessment process. We recognize that this was a large and diverse group of courses to review, and your report is an instructive model for other large groups (especially the intensives).

# Ethics Intensive Rubric

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Interpreting the goal: Demonstrate an understanding of ethical reasoning as it relates to specific course content.

Learning Goal	Exemplary	Competent	Developing
Student is able to recognize an ethical dilemma or issue.	Describes the nuances (or gray areas) of the dilemma/issue	Explains the basic conflict in the dilemma/issue	Does not recognize ethical dilemma/issue
Student can identify stakeholders in an ethical dilemma/issue and can demonstrate awareness of differing perspectives of those stakeholders	Student can explain stakeholders' perspectives and interests	Student can identify stakeholders and acknowledges different perspectives and interests	Student sees one perspective and fails to show awareness of other perspectives
Student is able to identify alternative courses of action/solutions regarding an ethical dilemma.	Student explains alternative courses of action	Student acknowledges alternative courses of action	Student sees no possible actions to be taken.
Student is able to evaluate the proposed courses of action from one or more ethical perspectives.	Student evaluates immediate and long-term risks and benefits for each proposed course of action from one or more ethical perspective	Student evaluates either immediate or long-term risks and benefits for each proposed course of action from one or more ethical perspective	Student identifies, but does not evaluate, immediate and/or long-term risks and benefits for each proposed course of action from one or more ethical perspective

# Ethics Intensive Report (excerpt)

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## Discussion

Currently, the rubric only offers options for explaining or acknowledging “alternative courses of action.” The team felt that the rubric could be improved by clarifying how the identification of *one* course of action would be rated.

The team also felt that the 4<sup>th</sup> element of the rubric may need to be split into two elements: evaluating the risks and the number of perspectives. The reviewers found that these two elements were very different, and yet both elements added to the richness and depth of responses.

## Future actions

Because of the discussions surrounding the rubric (see Assessment Plan section above), faculty who teach Ethics Intensive courses should consider clarifying the language of the learning goal to capture intentions regarding the meaning of “various ethical positions.”

# Writing & Thinking Example

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Illustrates a Future Action: Changed course goals from 6 to 4 (plus 2 practices)

- There were too many goals
- And 2 were not easily assessable in a sustainable way
  - Does it make sense to assess whether multiple drafts were effective?
  - Does it make sense to assess whether faculty and peers are giving feedback on drafts?

Illustrates differential resources: Can have 2 readers because of funding for summer workshops

# Next steps in improving assessment

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Required participation?

Accountability for faculty members?

Uneven quality across assessment areas

Are reports really being circulated?

Participation within interdisciplinary areas of the curriculum

Competing accreditation agencies

# Questions/Discussion

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# Contact Information

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