

Date: May 20, 2017
From: Peter Meidlinger, Karen Spence
To: Assessment Review Committee
Re: CORE 201 Assessment Report, 2017

CORE 201 Assessment: Spring 2017

CORE 201 is one of two CORE courses. We assess student learning in CORE 101 each fall, and student learning in CORE 201 each spring.

Assessment Spring 2017: Changes in the Process

In past assessments of CORE 201, we asked each CORE 201 instructor to respond to a set of questions about student learning as the instructors evaluated students' final work of the semester. We asked them specifically to focus on students' abilities to write analytical essays, think critically, make connections between the local and the global, and find and use outside sources effectively. We held workshops in May where instructors read and discussed one another's reflections, and invited them to make suggestions for revising the learning outcomes of the course based on those discussions.

In Spring 2017, we adopted, along with other programs at Drury, the practice of asking instructors to do two things differently. CORE 201 instructors

- 1) developed rubrics for the Learning Outcomes for CORE 201, and
- 2) submitted three examples of student learning from their courses.

Collecting Examples of Student Learning

Each instructor was asked to submit three examples of student writing that demonstrated evidence of students' abilities in addressing LO 1 and 3:

- LO 1: Conceptualize and analyze cultural, economic, social, political, or ecological connections.
- LO 3: Research and communicate analysis of and conclusions about these connections and concepts.

We further asked that the three examples of student writing represent "pass," "high pass," and "low pass," but we did not ask instructors to indicate which was which. We wanted the assessment team to evaluate the student work without aid from the instructors themselves.

The Assessment

The assessment team consisted of Dr. Karen Spence, Director of General Education, and Dr. Peter Meidlinger, AAVPA. They assessed 12 essays, three each from four sections of CORE 201, and met for an hour to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these samples of student work.

The Results

First, the two evaluators were both pleased to see the quality of student work across these four sections of CORE 201. We agreed that faculty have designed interesting courses that raise important global questions, and they are asking their students to do extensive and thoughtful work in understanding these questions. The students are learning a lot about other cultures and the relationship between history, language, politics, and gender issues. The student work we assessed underscores the importance of this course in the curriculum.

Students received the highest scores for LO3, #5: Writing Clearly and Directly

We scored 11 of the 12 essays as 3 or higher on the Rubric 5 for LO 3: “to write clearly and directly” (two received a 5; four received a 4; five received a 3). The students demonstrated an ability to write clear sentences and paragraphs, to evince an understanding of how to structure paragraphs and arguments, to write in the active voice and use modern English. These are higher scores than students have received from CORE 101 assessments using the same or similar rubric. The positive takeaway here is that students become better writers as they move through the curriculum. Now the question becomes: how do we help a larger number of students make even more progress, so that more work receives 4’s and 5’s in the future.

Students struggled in other areas related to LO 3.

Only seven of the twelve students received a score of 3 or above on evaluating and using sources and making good arguments. This is the area the assessors want to bring attention to as a potential source for improving student learning in CORE 201, and we would articulate our concerns in the following way:

Students typically evince an understanding of how to build arguments. They understand the need for an introduction with a thesis, a body that supports the thesis, and a conclusion that brings the argument to a close. But they struggle to evaluate their sources. The five papers that received less than 3 on LO 3, #2, 3, and 4 (**to evaluate appropriate sources; make effective use of sources; and make good arguments**) evinced three weaknesses:

- 1) they would often juxtapose two opposing views, but show little ability to evaluate which view is stronger;
- 2) they would demonstrate an ability to make sense of data (for example, about opportunities for women in Middle Eastern countries), but not be able to use that data effectively to advance an argument or connect it to other readings.
- 3) They did not demonstrate an awareness to anticipate obvious counter-arguments.

Students who showed proficiency in these three areas obviously had stronger papers, and the evaluators asked how can we help more students get proficient in these areas by the end of the course. This leads us to a suggestion for next year’s assessment:

Recommendation for Assessment in 2018

Recommendation 1:

As evaluators, we often wished we knew more about the context of the student writing; specifically, we want faculty to include the prompt students were addressing. Maybe more importantly, we believe that students are more likely to become proficient in the areas where we saw weaknesses if they are given opportunities for revision. So we want to ask CORE 201 faculty to adopt the process we use in CORE 101, which is to submit student work next year that includes a draft, an instructor’s comments on the draft, and the revised work. We believe this process will have a twofold effect: it is sound pedagogy from Composition Studies that will help students develop as writers, and it will enable us as faculty to continue to grow and experiment as teachers of writing and critical thinking.

Recommendation 2:

At least one of the evaluators struggled to identify Rubric 1: The work demonstrates the student’s ability to identify and analyze interdisciplinary connections. We would like to ask CORE 201 faculty to suss out, perhaps in more than one rubric, what we mean by that, and to find examples that illustrate where it is done well and where it is done less well.

**Review of Assessment Report
Assessment Review Committee (ARC)**

Academic Program: **CORE**

Date: **September 2017**

Criteria for Evaluating Assessment Reports

Criteria	Description of Criteria	Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary	Comments from Assessment Review Committee
SLOs				X		
Evidence of Student Learning				X		
Meaningful Rubrics				X		