

2022-2023 Core Assessment

Syllabi-Core Perspective Alignment Summary

Purpose of Assessment

In the 2022-2023 Core assessment cycle, the University Core Committee conducted an assessment to determine if Q, W, D, CS, US, IN, IS, IA, IH, and R courses met the core perspective statement and whether student assignments and artifacts were in place to make this determination. The focus of this assessment was not, specifically, on whether syllabi addressed the Core Qualities or integrated assignments to support the Core Quality learning outcomes. The focus was on how each Core perspective was defined and whether the course syllabi supported that definition, although, as is noted below, the working groups still expressed areas where the syllabi could be improved upon as they related to the Core Qualities.

Assessment Process

A Core Perspective Working Group for each of the ten core perspective areas were tasked with designing and implementing an assessment of an individual Core Perspective and whether course syllabi addressed that perspective substantively. Each Core Perspective Working Group was chaired by a member of the University Core Committee who then invited 2-4 other individuals to join the working group from outside the committee. It was determined that each working group should include at least one faculty member who had taught in the Core Perspective and include other stakeholders as able; a student, selected by the Working Group, could also be included at the discretion of the working group chair.

Core Perspective Working Groups

US – University Seminar

W – Written Communication

Q – Quantitative Reasoning

D – Diversity

CS – Contemporary Issues in Science

IA – Inquiry Arts

IH – Inquiry Humanities

IN – Inquiry Natural Sciences

IS – Inquiry Social Sciences

R – Research & Creative Experience

Each Core Perspective Working Group was charged with assessing the content of core courses within a core perspective by reviewing already submitted and approved syllabi. Ten syllabi for each Core Perspective were selected at random from the Courseleaf CIM system. PDFs of the syllabi were collected and shared in OneDrive folders for each working group.

Each working group established a process for assessing if courses, in general, met the core perspective statement, and if student assessments (artifacts) were in place to make this determination. Groups were encouraged to develop a Qualtrics survey to address the following:

- Do courses in the perspective address the standards specified in the core perspective statement?
- Is disciplinary knowledge effectively used to support the attainment of core perspective standards?
- Do course assignments assess student attainment of core perspective standards? (note that this does not suggest student work needs to be evaluated)
- Do courses support student attainment of the Core Qualities associated with the core perspective?
- Suggestions to enhance student attainment of core perspective standards.

Final reports were directed to contain an overall evaluation of how effectively the core perspective was being met and to include recommendations for improvement (Appendix A).

Summary of Findings in Brief

In general, working groups found that the vast majority of syllabi included the Core Perspective language and that course assignments were appropriate for the designated Core Perspective. Copies of the full reports can be found on the [Core Assessment](#) website. This finding is not surprising since during the 2021-2022 academic year, at the direction of the Vice Provost for Curriculum, Assessment, and Accreditation, all Core classes were required to: 1) update their syllabi to include Core Perspective language; 2) address how the Core Qualities related to the Core Perspective and the course itself were integrated into the course; and 3) update the Courseleaf CIM system with this information in addition to providing an explanation of what assignments were developed for future assessment of the Core Qualities.

Working Group Recommendations

The recommendations of each Core Perspective Working Group is provided below. For a full explanation, please see the individual reports on the Core Assessment website. Where no specific recommendations were provided in the final report, a brief summary has been compiled to express comments related to the results

US – University Seminar

A few of the programs fell short in incorporating the intention of the University Seminar (US) core perspective. The Core Committee may want to discuss what the expectation is for courses using this designation in terms of incorporating the perspective. Should all courses be meeting the perspective characteristics 100% and, if so, how can they do so if the characteristic does not fit into the paradigm of the program's intentions for the course? (e.g. "intro to major" courses have a programmatic agenda that may or may not meet all of the perspective characteristics.) If courses do not have to meet the perspective characteristics 100%, where is the line? And if that is permitted, does that water down the intention of the US core purpose overall?

The working group recommends that for future assessment of Core perspectives: All syllabi submitted to CIM have a brief description of the assignments and how those assignments address the Core Qualities for assessment as well as transparency for students. Include at least a sample of readings in the submitted syllabus, even if those readings change from semester to semester.

Programs that offer more than one US core class (i.e., CLS101/201 and HONR 201/301) should consider why they offer two different levels and develop curriculum that demonstrates the differences between the courses that reflects why students take them at a different time in their college journey and how that impacts the development of Core Qualities.

Regarding the Core Quality “Local and Global Citizen” – the working group acknowledges that the way that this is defined contains many “lofty ambitions” that are important for students to strive for but may be difficult for first-year students in the US core classes to attain beyond a basic or foundation-level understanding. Some discussion occurred related to how all the aspects of this core quality can be addressed in one course.

W – Written Communication

We recommend that all students take at least one writing course at MSU and that we move toward a wider variety of options before and beyond WRIT 101. A first step would be to make WRIT 201 and WRIT 221 a part of the Core and serve as options for students who exempt. A next step would include course options for students that additional practice. In a two-course sequence, WRIT 101 would serve as onboarding. In other iterations, we can imagine versions of WRIT 101 that include studio sections or small group recitations.

We also recommend that resources be allocated to assessing and updating our placement system as this might be part of the retention issue, since we have recently changed our system and may be changing it again as MUS system focuses on placement across the system. Finally, resources need to be allocated to reducing course caps which are currently at 22 for MSU courses when 15 per class is the standard recommendation by national organizations. Several presentations at a recent MUS conference (April, 2023) demonstrated that reducing course caps significantly improves DWF rates. Most seminar classes, that don’t include as much writing and intervention, are at a lower cap than the Core Communication requirement.

Q – Quantitative Reasoning

The following comments were included in the final report as areas for the Core Committee to consider for improvement, indicating that some support for faculty teaching Q courses is warranted:

- Clearly explain in the syllabus the goals of the course.
- I would like to see the syllabus tie more into some of the language in the core perspectives in the learning outcomes section.
- I think the course itself does support the Q Core Perspective, but I do not think this is well reflected in the syllabus.

- A few more assessment examples would enhance the connections taught to students.

D – Diversity

The CCC Diversity Subcommittee reviewed 13 courses currently listed with the D Core designation and reviewed the courses using the following questions as the review criteria:

Do the syllabi reflect the intention of the Core Perspective definition?

Do the assignment examples attached to the syllabus permit students to attain the Core Perspective learning outcomes as defined?

Do the working group reviewers have any additional feedback related to improving student attainment in the core perspective?

Overall, the 13 courses reviewed meet the three criteria above, with the exception of PHL 270D, which does not explicitly address the Core Diversity Perspective of the “Assesses Global & Local Citizen” requirement. Thus, the Committee recommends that the syllabus have more explicit language with regard to this Diversity Core Perspective. As the other 12 courses explicitly state the Diversity Core Perspectives, the Committee recommends that the PHL 270D syllabus be amended to align with the language in other course syllabi in the D core.

CS – Contemporary Issues in Science

The Contemporary Issues in Science (CS) core Perspective syllabi review indicated that the courses in this category are largely achieving the desired Core Perspective learning outcomes and demonstrating the usefulness and effectiveness of this aspect of the Core curriculum. The faculty who teach CS courses are providing good opportunities for students to show accomplishment in the desired Core Qualities.

We recommend that courses in the CS category have the course coordinator review the Core Perspective learning outcomes and rejuvenate the syllabi distributed to the students with activities and graded assignments that connect directly to the required Perspective attributes. Moreover, we recommend that the course instructors be clear to explain the learning outcomes and the rationale for these goals when introducing the course and when preparing students for graded course learning assessments. Finally, we recommend that course coordinators focus attention on the learning outcomes associated with this Core Perspective relating to scientific claims, ethics, and moral dilemmas in science, viz.: “...identify and reflect on ethical claims regarding scientific research and its applications to contemporary problems or challenges while acknowledging the conflicting values that underlie these claims, and engage constructively in open discussions about contemporary issues and ethical or moral dilemmas in science.”

IA – Inquiry Arts

Due to transitions in leadership, the results of this working group have not been received yet.

IH – Inquiry Humanities

In order to make Core assessment a beneficial process for faculty, perhaps faculty teaching Core classes could be asked (either on a voluntary basis, or required but only every couple years) to reflect on the one assignment or class activity that they felt was most effective in accomplishing Core outcomes and to share the assignment guidelines back through the MSU Core Committee and/or the MSU Center for Faculty Excellence. This information could be shared and therefore beneficial for all MSU faculty teaching in the Core curriculum.

IN – Inquiry Natural Sciences

The working group expressed the following as recommendations for future improvements in some of the courses that were reviewed:

- Add syllabus language related to core qualities and perspective. Provide examples of student assessments to demonstrate attainment.
- Encourage messaging throughout course to remind students how course provides basis to think scientifically and a model that can be applied in non-core coursework.
- Update the syllabus to include the CORE designation (XXXX 201IN) and reference IN core learning objectives.
- Include a description of in-class activities that accomplish the core objectives.

IS – Inquiry Social Sciences

The committee felt it would be more useful to see specific examples of assignments, course materials, and lecture content to better assess whether a course meets the standards for this core curriculum perspective. The committee expressed the need to be more specific with how the social science inquiry perspective is defined. As currently stated, the definition is vague and does not detail the diverse social science methods used in the field.

R – Research & Creative Experience

Improvement

- Upper-division courses could benefit from maintaining the components of culminating project or providing more detailed explanations.
- Although there are no attached assignments, some syllabi mentioned brief assignment guidelines.
- Art-related courses (photo, music, web design) may benefit from providing more explanation of the research process. (Alternatively, is it acceptable not to include research experience given the nature of this creative art/design-related field?).
- Some courses (EGEN, CS) may elaborate on the specific research skills (using one or two words) that their students can learn.

Strength

- Upper-division courses have strong alignment from course activities and assignments that precede a culminating paper, resulting in a comprehensive experience that integrates and synthesizes what students have learned in their fields.

- Lower-division courses include detailed research analysis, integration of core qualities, and learning various learning research skills such as data collection, analyzing data, and strategy development through semester-long research projects.

Others

- It would be helpful if there were a clarification that a senior course (upper division) means 400 level.
- Is there a clarification as to whether web design, art, and photo courses (100, 200 level) still need to include research skills or experiences? If not, why do these courses have an “R” designation in their course number?

Appendix A

FOUR YEAR CORE ASSESSMENT PLAN & ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

Year 4 Core Assessment Plan

Purpose:

Assessment of substantive content of Q, W, D, CS, US, R and Inquiry courses.

Core Perspective Working Groups:

Descriptions of the core perspectives can be found [here](#).

- US – University Seminar
- W – Written Communication
- Q – Quantitative Reasoning
- D – Diversity
- CS – Contemporary Issues in Science
- IA – Inquiry Arts
- IH – Inquiry Humanities
- IN – Inquiry Natural Sciences
- IS – Inquiry Social Sciences
- R – Research & Creative Experience

Process:

A Core Perspective Working Group for each of the 10 areas will design and implement an assessment of the Core Perspectives in the AY 22-23. Each Core Perspective Working Group will be chaired by a member of the University Core Committee and made up of 2-4 other members. At least 1 faculty member who teaches in the Core Perspective should be on the working group. A student, selected by the Working Group, can be included at the discretion of the chair.

Core Perspective Working Group Charge:

The Core Perspective Working Group is charged with assessing the content of core courses within a core perspective. The working group will establish an appropriate process for assessing if courses, in general, meet the core perspective statement and if student assessments (artifacts) are in place to make this determination. The final report should contain an overall evaluation of how effectively the core perspective is being met and suggestions for improvements to consider.

Timeline:

Form Core Perspective Working Group	by Fall 2022
Meet as a Core Perspective Working Group	by February 1
Develop draft plan and submit to Core Committee for discussion	by February 1
Finalize plans (feedback from Core Committee returned)	by February 17
Implement assessment protocol	Spring 2023
Develop Final Report and Submit to Core committee	by May 11, 2023

Year 4 Core Assessment Guidance

The Year 4 Core Perspective assessment emphasizes flexibility. Each working group is charged to develop a plan that best fits the types of courses and learning outcomes associated with the core perspective. Primary focus should be on how the courses support student attainment of the core perspective. Secondary focus should be on how the attainment of the core perspective supports student advancement toward Core Quality attainment (MSU graduates are...).

In the spirit of flexibility, the required elements of the final report are minimized, by design, to allow faculty to focus on data that will best inform the report.

Scope of Review

- 1) Do courses in the perspective address the standards specified in the core perspective statement?
- 2) Is disciplinary knowledge effectively used to support the attainment of core perspective standards?
- 3) Do course assignments assess student attainment of core perspective standards? (note that this does not suggest student work needs to be evaluated)
- 4) Do courses support student attainment of the Core Qualities associated with the core perspective?
- 5) Suggestions to enhance student attainment of core perspective standards.

Data

- A list of all approved core courses in the perspective being assessed will be provided to each working group.
- All courses in the core perspective do not need to be included in the assessment. A representative sampling, especially for core perspective areas with a large number of eligible courses, can be employed.
- Course syllabi for most core courses, as well as examples of assignments used to assess student attainment of the core perspective standard, will be made available to working groups.
- Requests for student artifacts should not be necessary as assessment is focused on the alignment of course learning outcomes and core perspective standards.