

University Core A Assessment Plan: Embedded Assessments for CORE 101, 102/103, 201, and 202

Introduction

As part of the Core Curriculum requirements, students are required to complete a series of four courses in University Core A: Core Foundations. These courses include CORE 101 Essentials of Written and Oral Communication, CORE 102 Advanced Written and Oral Communication, CORE 201 Topics in Critical Inquiry, and CORE 202 Topics in Ethical Inquiry. CORE 103 Written and Oral Communications – Honors replaces CORE 101 and CORE 102 for those new students in the Honors Academy whose backgrounds and competence indicate that they are prepared for advanced study. Upon completion of University Core A, Radford University students will have achieved competency in four key learning areas: written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, and technology/information literacy.

Background

University Core A is developmental in nature. As such, key concepts and competencies are introduced, reinforced, and assessed throughout the four-course sequence. Achievement of learning outcomes (Appendix A) will be assessed using embedded student assignments designed as part of the courses and required in all sections (Appendix B). Student works will be collected through an ePortfolio system and assessed via rubrics, which will be developed by instructors of the courses.

Accreditation and Other Requirements

SACS

As part our regional accreditation, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) dictates that we must assess general education. SACS Comprehensive Standards pertaining to general education include the following:

3.3.1 This institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational program and its administration and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

3.4.10 The institution defines and publishes general education requirements for its undergraduate programs and major program requirements for all its programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs.

3.5.1 The institution identifies college-level [as opposed to high school-level] competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.

In addition, SACS dictates where the responsibility of general education assessment lies:

3.4.12 The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty.

SCHEV

The State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) requires that state-institutions within Virginia measure and report student learning in six core competency areas; written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, information literacy, scientific reasoning, and quantitative reasoning. During the first cycle of the core competency program all institutions were asked to assess the competency of students in the six defined areas. At the end of this cycle, SCHEV required institutions to

demonstrate that the academic environment was “adding value.” Therefore, assessments required that institutions pre-test and post-test students in some manner to demonstrate student improvement.

Over the past semester SCHEV has relaxed their assessment requirements in terms of the value-added component. It is now up to the institution to determine what it means for students to be competent in a specific area and if value-added assessment is appropriate. Additionally, institutions must submit a report outlining what they will be doing over a six-year time period to assess all of the areas and how and when the information will be reported back to SCHEV. Institutions determine the outcomes for each area, choose whether or not to assess the competencies using a value-added or competency model, and develop a plan for reporting these back to the state.

Procedure to Encompass All Requirements for State Mandates and Regional Accreditation

The assessment of general education is required by SACS in order for institutions to meet their reaccreditation requirements. In addition, SCHEV requires core competency testing of six predetermined areas. Due to recent changes, Radford University is able to utilize the same assessment measures and procedures to cover both SACS and SCHEV requirements. This plan has been structured to meet assessment requirements by both bodies without having to duplicate or alter procedures. Not only will this plan meet all agency requirements, it will allow Radford University to improve the Core Curriculum Program.

Methodology

Pilot Test

Student works identified in Curriculum Map for University Core A will be collected during the 2010-11 academic year. Volunteers will be solicited from CORE 101 and 102/103 instructors and those who have taught CORE 201 and 202 previously. Student works will be submitted in electronic or paper format to the Director of Academic Assessment before **May 15, 2011**.

During spring 2011, draft rubrics will be developed by elected teams of faculty teaching in University Core A as well as experts in the learning areas (i.e., written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, and technology/information literacy). Draft rubrics will be developed by teams of instructors currently teaching the courses, including tenure-track faculty, adjunct faculty, and graduate students, with input from experts in the learning areas. These instructors will collaborate on rubrics that reflect the assignments as they are being taught in relation to the outcomes.

Full-time and adjunct faculty teaching in University Core A will be solicited to assess sample student works and revise draft rubrics as applicable. This work will occur during summer 2011, and qualified instructors* will be compensated according to university guidelines.

Full Implementation

Student works identified in the Curriculum Map for University Core A will be collected using an ePortfolio system and assessed using the finalized rubrics. A draft report will be written and submitted to CCAC for review and comment. Subsequently, CCAC will recommend improvements to University Core A program based upon assessment results.

*Qualified instructors will have at least a master’s degree, experience using rubrics, and at least two semesters teaching in University Core A.

Assessment Timeline

<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>	<u>2012-2013</u>	<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>	<u>2015-2016</u>
Pilot Test	Implementation	Implementation	Draft Report	Final Report & Revision of Plan	Implementation

Stage 1: Assessment plan approved by CCAC and Faculty Senate. Plan submitted to SCHEV by **March 1, 2011**.

Stage 2: Draft rubrics submitted to CCAC for review by **April 29, 2011**.

Stage 3: During summer 2011, student works from the 2010-11 academic year will be assessed using draft rubrics. Changes and revisions to rubrics will be made when applicable and resubmitted to CCAC. Summary data from the pilot testing will be presented to CCAC before **December 1, 2011**.

Stage 4: During 2011-12 and 2012-13 academic years, student works identified in assessment plan will be collected and assessed.

Stage 5: Draft report of analysis submitted to CCAC by **February 1, 2014**, for review and comment. CCAC recommends improvements to University Core A program based upon assessment results.

Stage 6: Final report submitted to Faculty Senate and SCHEV by **June 1, 2014**.

Stage 7: During 2014-15 academic year, improvements made to University Core A to enhance student achievement of the learning outcomes.

Appendix A: Student Learning Outcomes for University Core A

Upon completion of University Core A, Radford University students will have achieved competency in four key concept areas: written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, and technology/information literacy.

Goal 1: Radford University students will demonstrate competency in critical reading, standard written English, audience-specific writing, clear and effective prose, and other elements of composition.

Radford University students will be able to:

- a. effectively use standard written English (including grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure) to construct a thesis-driven essay supported by reasonable arguments
- b. demonstrate the writing process through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, proofreading, and presentation
- c. choose appropriate genres and styles when writing for a variety of different audiences
- d. describe and evaluate critically a variety of print and other sources, synthesize and document material appropriately, and avoid plagiarism when developing a research paper

Goal 2: Radford University students will be able to communicate orally in clear and coherent language appropriate to purpose, occasion, and audience. Radford University students will be able to:

- a. identify and explain components of and influences on the communication process in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts
- b. demonstrate effective listening and critical analysis skills in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts
- c. identify and apply communication strategies appropriate to audiences in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts
- d. identify and demonstrate communication skills appropriate in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts

Goal 3: Radford University students will learn to distinguish knowledge from opinion, challenge ideas, and develop reasonable strategies for belief formation. Radford University students will be able to:

- a. apply the processes of deduction, induction, and other key elements of logical reasoning
- b. create a well-reasoned argument by evaluating the validity of ideas and information, providing evidence and support, and arguing against competing claims when applicable
- c. analyze issues, solve problems, and apply reasoning to everyday situations
- d. evaluate written and verbal arguments by discerning any logical fallacies, distinguishing between documented fact and opinion, examining explicit and implicit assumptions, and assessing the use of evidence to draw inferences and conclusions

Goal 4: Radford University students will be able to acquire, analyze, and synthesize digital and print information and explain how digital information is organized and communicated. Radford University students will be able to:

- a. explain contemporary technological trends and issues
- b. utilize industry standard technologies as appropriate for academic purposes
- c. identify economic, societal, legal, privacy, and ethical considerations for using and sharing digital and print information
- d. demonstrate the use of basic research techniques to locate information from a variety of electronic and print sources
- e. apply appropriate modes of inquiry to evaluate digital and print information in terms of credibility, reliability, and accuracy

Appendix B: UCA Official Assignments

CORE 101

Critical Reading Logs

This component asks students to read primary texts and examine and write about their ideas and language. They will also learn to cite and document the texts used and prepare works cited entries.

Personal Essay

Through this component, students will be introduced to the writing process and how to use it to develop an organized essay in standard written English. Students will also develop small group communication skills during peer review sessions.

Interview

This component will involve the development of interviewing skills that result in at least one interview that is described and analyzed as part of the personal essay, expository essay, or thesis-driven essay.

Expository Essay

This component will guide students into writing objectively about an idea or experience of interest.

Thesis-Driven Argument

Students will write a personal opinion essay, developing reasons and examples to support their opinions. Students will learn how to analyze an issue, apply reasoning to the problem, and develop a solution. They will also learn how to choose an appropriate audience to be persuaded and use a style appropriate to that audience in a finished essay.

CORE 102

Textual Analysis

Students will analyze a primary text alongside secondary texts which comment on it. They will learn the difference between primary and secondary texts, and evaluate the secondary texts as arguments with logical structures, explicit and implicit assumptions, and supporting evidence. In their written analysis, students will summarize, paraphrase, and quote from the texts, documenting them correctly in a works cited page.

Researched Essay

Students will write a paper for which they first conduct research in order to answer a research question related to their topic. A visit to the Radford University library and exposure to its various research tools, such as the computerized catalog system, major indexes, and electronic sources will orient the students to the library's offerings. Instructors will assign and evaluate the various steps in the research process as well as the finished product, including but not restricted to annotations of their sources and a working bibliography. Annotations will both summarize and evaluate the usefulness of sources.

Informative Speech

Students will present orally on their research topic to both inform their audience. They will learn the basics of oral presentation and be evaluated both on content and presentation. They will be asked to reflect on their speech and the speeches of others.

CORE 103 - Honors*Self-Expression Essay*

This project introduces students to the Aristotelian concept of ethos by asking students to write a paper in which they reflect on and analyze the ways they present themselves in a variety of situations both offline and online. This project opens the electronic portfolio.

Textual Analysis Project

In this project, students will analyze the issues raised by a set of texts in relation to each other, using at least two primary texts and associated secondary texts. Students will cite their sources and include a works cited page. As a part of the project, they will prepare an oral presentation, supported by visual aids.

Researched Argument Project

Students will write an argument paper in which they conduct research in an area of inquiry and then argue a thesis related to their topic. They will then prepare an oral presentation, supported by visual aids.

CORE 201*Textual Analysis*

In this project, students will analyze arguments on a topic related to the course theme. Using the principles of logic and rhetoric, students will develop criteria for strong arguments and evaluate the arguments they've gathered according to that criteria in an essay. The sources will be cited and documented on a reference page.

Researched Argument

In this project, students will use a combination of general interest and scholarly sources derived from library databases in order to conduct research on a topic related to the theme of the course and develop their own line of reasoning in a researched argument essay. Students will prepare an annotated bibliography of sources. In this project they will learn to distinguish between general interest and peer-reviewed sources.

Persuasive Speech

Students will make an oral argument on a topic related to the course theme. Students will support their claims with effective inductive or deductive arguments, appropriate emotional appeals, and development of their own credibility. Speeches will include appropriate presentational aids.

Reading Logs

Throughout the semester students will critically read and respond to a series of texts according to the instructor's guidelines. Reading logs are intended to provide students with opportunities to engage with the texts, encouraging the application of rhetorical principles, inductive and deductive reasoning, and identification of fallacies.

CORE 202*Textual Analysis Project*

In this project, students will apply the skills they have developed through the previous textual analysis projects to a critique of conflicting ethical arguments on a major ethical issue which they will cast in an argument essay, citing and documenting the arguments used.

Group Project and Presentation

In this project, students will work in a small group to examine the significant aspects of a major ethical issue and how different methods of ethical reasoning would approach the issue. Students will collaborate on the research and participate in a group presentation.

Multimedia Project

Students will create a multimedia project related to the course theme. Multimedia projects should model proper use of copyrighted materials.

Reading Logs

Throughout the semester students will critically read and respond to a series of texts according to the instructor's guidelines. Reading logs are intended to provide students with opportunities to engage with the texts, encouraging the application of ethical theories and methods of ethical reasoning.

Appendix C: Curriculum Map for University Core A

The University Core A (UCA) sequence includes four courses – Core 101, 102, 201, and 202. Students in the Honors Academy complete the sequence using a specially designed course, Core 103, in addition to Core 201 and 202.

The curriculum map below demonstrates where learning outcomes are introduced (I), reinforced (R), and assessed (A) through assignments and UCA Handbook readings.

Learning outcomes for UCA will be assessed using the following assignments.

CORE 101:	Thesis Driven Argument and Interview
CORE 102/103:	Researched Essay and Textual Analysis
CORE 201:	Researched Argument, Persuasive Speech, Textual Analysis, and Annotated Bibliography
CORE 202:	Textual Analysis, Multimedia Project, Group Presentation, and Group Project

Curriculum Map for University Core A

CORE A Outcomes	CORE 101	CORE 102/103	CORE 201	CORE 202
Goal 1: Radford University students will demonstrate competency in critical reading, standard written English, audience-specific writing, clear and effective prose, and other elements of composition.				
Radford University students will be able to:				
a. Effectively use standard written English (including grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure to construct a thesis-driven essay supported by reasonable arguments.	I, A: Thesis-Driven Argument R: HB Appendix B	R: HB Appendix B	R: HB Appendix B	A: Textual Analysis R: HB Appendix B
b. Demonstrate the writing process through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, proofreading and presentation	I: Personal Essay R: HB Chapters 101: 5-12	A: Researched Essay	A: Researched Argument	
c. Choose appropriate genres and styles when writing for a variety of different audiences	I, A: Thesis-Driven Argument R: HB Appendix A	R: HB Appendix A	R: HB Appendix A	A: Multimedia Project R: HB Appendix A
d. Describe and evaluate critically a variety of print and other sources, synthesize and document material appropriately, and avoid plagiarism when developing a research paper	I: Critical Reading Logs R: HB Appendix C	A: Researched Essay R: HB Appendix C, Chapters 102: 5, 7	A: Researched Argument R: HB Appendix C	R: HB Appendix C

CORE A Outcomes	CORE 101	CORE 102/103	CORE 201	CORE 202
Goal 2: Radford University students will be able to communicate orally in clear and coherent language appropriate to purpose, occasion, and audience.				
Radford University students will be able to:				
a. Identify and explain components of and influences on the communication process in interpersonal, small group, and public contexts	I: HB 101: 3, 15, 16 [A: Online Module & Reflective Essay]*	R: HB 102: 16	R: HB 201: 12, 13	R: HB 202: 1-5
b. Demonstrate effective listening and critical analysis skills in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts	I: HB 101: 15-17 A: Interview		R: HB 201: 14	R: HB 202: 1-5
c. Identify and apply communication strategies appropriate to audiences in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts.	I: HB 101: 15	R: Informative Speech R: HB 102: 14, 15	A: Persuasive Speech R: HB 201: 12, 15	R: HB 202: 6
d. Identify and demonstrate communication skills appropriate in interpersonal, small group, and public speaking contexts	I: HB 101: 15-17	R: HB 102: 14-16	R: HB 201: 12, 13, 15	A: Group Presentation R: HB 202: 2-6

* Online modules and reflective essays were removed from course requirements in 2010-2011.

I = Introduced; R = Reinforced; A = Assessed

HB = University Core A Handbook

CORE A Outcomes	CORE 101	CORE 102/103	CORE 201	CORE 202
Goal 3: Radford University students will learn to distinguish knowledge from opinion, challenge ideas, and develop reasonable strategies for belief formation.				
Radford University students will be able to:				
a. Apply the processes of deduction, induction, and other key elements of logical reasoning	I: HB 101: 2	R: HB 102: 2, 6	A: Researched Argument	
b. Create a well-reasoned argument by evaluating the validity of ideas and information, providing evidence and support, and arguing against competing claims when applicable	I: HB 101: 2, 7-9	R: HB 102: 2-6, 12	A: Textual Analysis	
c. Analyze issues, solve problems, and apply reasoning to everyday situations	I: HB 101: 2	R: HB 102: 2, 6	R: HB 201: 1-10	A: Group Project
d. Evaluate written and verbal arguments by discerning any logical fallacies, distinguishing between documented fact and opinion, examining explicit and implicit assumptions, and assessing the use of evidence to draw inferences and conclusions	I: HB 101: 2	A: Textual Analysis	R: HB 201: 1-10	

CORE A Outcomes	CORE 101	CORE 102/103	CORE 201	CORE 202
Goal 4: Radford University students will be able to acquire, analyze, and synthesize digital and print information and explain how digital information is organized and communicated.				
Radford University students will be able to:				
a. Explain contemporary technological trends and issues	[I, A: Reflective Essay]*			
b. Utilize industry standard technologies as appropriate for academic purposes	I: HB 101: 18		R: HB 201: 15	A: Multimedia Project
c. Identify economic, societal, legal, privacy, and ethical considerations for using and sharing digital and print information	I: HB Appendix C	I: HB Appendix D	I: HB 201: 16, 17	A: Multimedia Project
d. Demonstrate the use of basic research techniques to local information from a variety of electronic and print source		I: HB 102: 7-10, 13	A: Annotated Bibliography R: HB 201: 10, 11	
e. Apply appropriate modes of inquiry to evaluate digital and print information in terms of credibility, reliability, and accuracy		I: HB 102: 11-12	A: Annotated Bibliography R: HB 201: 10, 11	

* Reflective essays were removed from course requirements in 2010-2011.

I = Introduced; R = Reinforced; A = Assessed
HB = University Core A Handbook