



Humanistic Studies | 2015-2016 Assessment Report

1. Please give a brief overview of the assessment data you collected this year.

The Humanistic Studies Unit decided to assess (by subcommittee) the third Learning Outcome for HUS, which reads as follows:

Students will be transformed and given greater self-awareness by understanding the historical and cultural context for human values through the study of literature, philosophy, language, and history.

The Subcommittee designed two mechanisms to assess this significant Learning Outcome.

Assessment mechanism #1: Direct assessment: Humanistic Studies Program Survey (see appendix).

Process:

We asked the students in our Humanistic Studies Capstone Seminar to complete a program survey designed to unearth our students' views the value of their coursework in relation to Learning Outcome #3. A total of nine students completed the survey, though one student did not complete both sides of the survey.

The results:

Overall, the survey results suggest that Humanistic Studies majors (and some minors) were transformed by their coursework. Many of the responses also suggest that students gained "greater self-awareness" through engagement with texts, class discussions, high-impact practices, and general self-reflection provoked by their coursework.

While a few students noted that their values transformed as a result of their course work, many noted that they became more aware of what their values are, and that their coursework promoted adding nuance to and appreciation of their values. For example, one student noted that Humanistic Studies coursework pushed the student to "really...think about what I think and believe."

All of the students surveyed applied the knowledge from their Humanistic Studies courses to other classes, with several noting that they did so "all the time" or "fairly often." The vast majority of students (8/9) also noted that their coursework had provided them with the knowledge and skills to tackle "real-world" issues. For example, students remarked on their ability to think in a "new critical way," "to understand people and the world better," and "to view other perspectives and to differentiate what could be useful in solving a real-world problem."

The vast majority of students (8/9) described a transformational experience, whether it emerged through engaging with texts, a study-abroad opportunity, or an intensive class project or class debate.

For example, one student remarked that the process of engaging in experiential archeology—and visiting a recreated Viking longhouse in particular—provided the student a “greater appreciation for how things are created and studied.” Another student noted that reading Friedrich Nietzsche helped this student learn that “it’s o.k. to think that some people are wrong, even [if they have] valid points.” Finally, one student noted that Humanistic Studies courses provoked this student to “think about [the student’s] religion...not to doubt it, per se, but try to understand its mechanisms through human perspectives, and speculate through ‘heavenly perspectives.’”

Assessment mechanism #2: Indirect assessment of student writing

Process:

The HUS Assessment Subcommittee asked two faculty members whose courses meet Learning Objective #3 to submit anonymized student writing for the subcommittee’s evaluation at the end of the Spring 2016 semester.

The instructors of two core upper-level courses (Perspectives on Human Values: The Medieval World; Perspectives on Human Values: The Age of Reason) met to discuss how their courses help students achieve Learning Outcomes #3. This discussion led both faculty members to construct a final assignment that required students to reflect on what they have learned, or to consider how they might transfer their knowledge and skills to contemporary issues they are passionate about.

The subcommittee chose to adapt the Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning VALUE Rubric created by the AACU (see appendix) for its assessment. In particular, the subcommittee chose to focus on “curiosity,” “transfer” and “reflection.”

The Chair, along with the assistance of our academic department associate, collected and anonymized all student work, and sent 5 examples along with the rubric to the subcommittee in preparation of a standardization meeting. Following that meeting, all 65 examples were sent to the committee.

The results: Our rubric consisted of 3 essential points of analysis—curiosity, transfer and reflection—which are listed below (please see the rubric in the appendix itself for further clarification and elucidation of each).

At the standardization meeting, the Assessment Subcommittee agreed that student writing from one of the courses did not allow for an honest assessment of “transfer” according to the adopted rubric. As a result, the Subcommittee only assessed students’ ability to “transfer” knowledge in 32 out of 65 pieces of student writing.

The following results reflect the assessment of 65 pieces of student writing following the initial standardization meeting:

	Out of 4
Curiosity	2.84
Transfer*	3.05
Reflection	2.7

*32/65 pieces assessed for transfer

2. How will you use what you've learned from the data that was collected?

Brief summary and initial findings:

All student responses met the “benchmark” of our assessment (see rubric to note what is considered “benchmark”). Often the issue was one of depth—all students’ writing revealed engagement, curiosity, passion, and reflection, but some student responses lacked the depth or nuance of those that the committee ranked highly.

One emergent issue that arose from our assessment relates to students’ personal transformation through self-awareness and critical reflection. One subcommittee member noted that he wished the students had “considered their own truth claims as carefully as they considered those of their sources.” In this one regard, the subcommittee’s assessment of student writing is somewhat at odds with the Humanistic Studies survey, in which students expressed their increased critical awareness and understanding of their own values, and we encourage the Humanistic Studies faculty to engage in a discussion of this issue while it considers this report in 2016-17.

One possible avenue for discussion would be for the Unit to consider our students intellectual and ethical development based on the scheme presented by William Perry in his Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years, summarized at: <http://people.bethel.edu/~kisrob/hon301k/sessions03/9-22-03/Perry.html>. HUS may wish to consider what position or stage we believe our students are at, and where we wish them to be.

RUBRIC FOR HUS ASSESSMENT, 2015-16¹

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone 4	Milestones		Benchmark 1
		3	2	
Curiosity	Explores a topic in depth, yielding a rich awareness and/or little-known information indicating intense interest in the subject.	Explores a topic in depth, yielding insight and/or information indicating interest in the subject.	Explores a topic with some evidence of depth, providing occasional insight and/or information indicating mild interest in the subject.	Explores a topic at a surface level, providing little insight and/or information beyond the very basic facts indicating low interest in the subject.
Transfer	Makes explicit references to previous learning and applies in an innovative (new and creative) way that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.	Makes references to previous learning and shows evidence of applying that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.	Makes references to previous learning and attempts to apply that knowledge and those skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.	Makes vague references to previous learning but does not apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.
Reflection	Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) in depth to reveal significantly changed perspectives about educational and life experiences, which provide foundation for expanded knowledge, growth, and maturity over time.	Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) in depth, revealing fully clarified meanings or indicating broader perspectives about educational or life events.	Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) with some depth, revealing slightly clarified meanings or indicating a somewhat broader perspectives about educational or life events.	Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) at a surface level, without revealing clarified meaning or indicating a broader perspective about educational or life events.

¹ This rubric is based almost exclusively on the “Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning VALUE Rubric created by the AACU. Excerpted with permission from *Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievement: Tips and tools for Using Rubrics*, edited by Terrel L. Rhodes. Copyright 2010 by the Association of American Colleges & Universities.