University College Council
Foundational Studies Program
Assessment Report 2019-2020

I.   Executive Summary[i]

This report details the activities of the University College Council-directed Assessment Team for the 2019-2020 Assessment Cycle of the Foundational Studies Program. The Assessment included syllabus evaluation, category learning objective review, course inventory review, and student assessment of learning (both direct and indirect methods). The categories of Literary Studies and Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity were evaluated.

Direct assessment methods showed that students met Benchmark, Milestone 1 and Milestone 2 outcomes in three categories of the Literary Studies analysis. Since most students take the LS course as sophomores and this is typically the only course they take in LS at ISU, the Council was satisfied with the outcomes. It made recommendations for aspirational outcomes in the future. Indirect measures showed that students had positive perceptions of their own learning, with over 50% believing they showed strong performance in meeting the learning outcomes.

The student learning outcomes for GPCD were mixed, with a not insignificant number of students not meeting benchmark, suggesting problems with sampling and with assignments misaligned with the category learning objectives. Further, indirect measures showed that over 50% of students believed they showed strong performance in meeting the learning objectives. The UCC recommended that an ad hoc team revise the GPCD learning objectives in response to student outcomes and faculty disciplinary concerns about the learning objectives themselves.

The Dean and Leadership Team were concerned that the evaluation of syllabi was limited. In order to effect more rigorous evaluation of courses, all syllabi would need to be annotated to show the alignment of course work to the category learning objectives.

The University College Council, Leadership Team, and Assessment Team were pleased with the results of the first complete assessment cycle. While there are areas in which the processes could be refined, generally processes were smooth and yielded useful findings. Equally important, however, was the thoughtful participation of faculty and staff in the assessment process, and the initiation of communities of practice around categories in which faculty teach courses.

II.   Introduction and Background

Prior to 2018, the University College Council (UCC), which oversees the Foundational Studies Program, completed the assessment of three areas: Communication, Writing, and Upper-Division Integrative Elective.[ii] It also used assessment data in the revision of Historical Perspectives and Quantitative Literacy categories. In 2018, the UCC began to explore a long-term, comprehensive assessment plan of the complete academic program. The University College dean sent a study team to the Higher Learning Commission Assessing General Education conference in January

2019, which returned with recommendations to support a long-term, systemic assessment plan. The plan was developed, debated, modified, and adopted by the UCC on 5-9-2019. The comprehensive plan brings together direct assessment of a sample of artifacts, indirect assessment of student success and student self-reporting, and an analytical assessment of performance variables. The Assessment Plan established that each category of the program be assessed over a six-year period. Upon completion of the assessment cycle each year, the UCC is responsible for reporting results and action steps to the University community. This report serves this purpose for the first full year of category assessment.

The Assessment Plan directs the UCC and the Assessment Team (the University College Assessment Coordinator; the University Assessment Director, and the UCC chair) to coordinate category assessment for two categories each year. During the 2019-2020 academic year, the categories of Literary Studies and Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity were assessed.

III.   Review of Courses, CLOs and Inventory

A. Syllabus Evaluation

Syllabi are collected each semester from faculty teaching all courses in Foundational Studies. The Leadership Team collected submitted syllabi for LS and GPCD for further evaluation. UCC members looked at each syllabus in teams and used a checklist form to identify the following:

- were category outcomes clearly listed on the syllabus?
- were FS syllabus policies listed?

The 2019 Assessment Plan calls for demonstration of how assignments address the learning objectives. We found that most syllabi did not demonstrate this, as it was not previously a requirement for instructors to provide in the syllabus presented to students. Therefore, the UCC did not complete this evaluation.

Only a small percentage of the 54 syllabi evaluated were missing policy statements. None were missing Learning Objective statements. At least one case was shown in which a hyperlink to the Foundational Studies web site was provided, rather than a complete listing of the outcomes.

Because most syllabi did not contain annotations that demonstrated the alignment of assignments with learning objectives, the UCC did not attempt to make an evaluation.

B. Category Learning Objectives Review

Category Learning Objectives were reviewed in conjunction with assessment of student learning. See V. Actions and Next Steps below.

C. Course Inventory Review

The Course Inventory Review will be completed in 2020-2021. Participating departments will be asked to submit annotated syllabi that demonstrate alignment of assignments with learning objectives. At the same time, the UCC will open the category for new course submissions. All will be reviewed by the UCC to determine the final course inventory.

IV. Assessment of Student Learning

A. Methods and Activities

No Data Analytic evaluations were completed in 2019-2020 cycle.

Indirect Measures: Student Self-Evaluation

Each semester, students enrolled in Foundational Studies Program courses receive questions (Category Learning Objectives Survey or CLOS) related to the FS learning objectives of the course along with the regular student course evaluation. These evaluations are online, and students complete them generally at a 30-35% rate. The results are provided to the Leadership and Assessment Teams.

Direct Artifact Assessment

Student artifacts from courses within the GPCD and Literary Studies array were used to assess whether students met the learning outcomes. The Assessment Team offered workshops (offered twice) for faculty teaching courses in each category. In the workshops, faculty reviewed the learning outcomes for their category, then discussed aligning assignments with those outcomes. At the end of the workshops, faculty chose an assignment that aligned with at least one of the category outcomes at their own discretion, then used guidelines for random selection to submit 5 student responses to that assignment. Pairs of faculty and staff volunteers were assigned to rate artifacts in the category in which they did not teach, and were briefly trained to use the category rubric to evaluate the student artifacts. Volunteers were required to reach consensus before determining the final rating for each artifact. Possible ratings included Below Benchmark, Benchmark, Milestone 1, Milestone 2, or Capstone level mastery. Some courses in each category could not be assessed for a variety of reasons, including assignments not reflecting learning outcomes and faculty who left the university prior to submitting artifacts. Students' self-evaluations (CLOSs) of their learning in GPCD and Literary Studies classes were also reviewed and compared to their performance as seen in artifact assessment.

B. Results
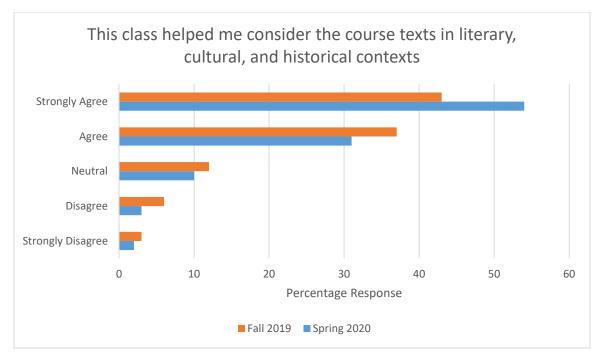
Indirect Measures

Student perceptions related to category learning outcomes survey are displayed below. Note that Spring 2020 responses were collected during remote instruction due to COVID-19.

<u>Literary Studies</u>

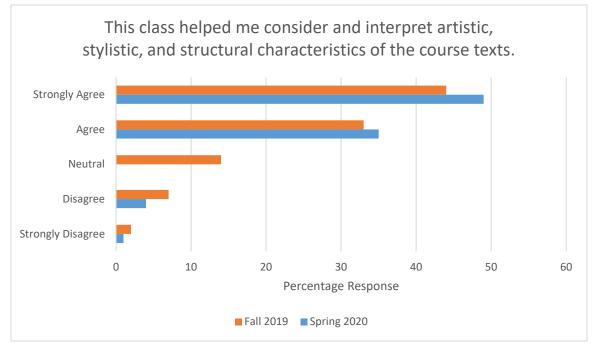Average response rate: Fall 2019 = 35%; Spring 2020 = 26%

Q1. This class helped me consider the course texts in literary, cultural, and historical contexts.

Fall n=252; Spring n=209

This class helped me consider the course texts in literary, cultural, and historical contexts
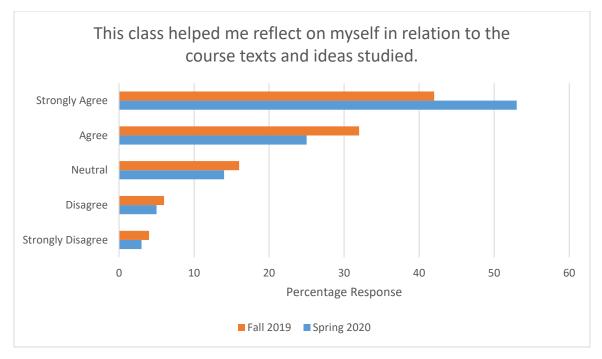
Q2. This class helped me consider and interpret artistic, stylistic, and structural characteristics of the course texts.

Fall n=250; Spring n=207

This class helped me consider and interpret artistic, stylistic, and structural characteristics of the course texts.

Q3. This class helped me reflect on myself in relation to the course texts and ideas studied.

Fall n=248; Spring n=208

This class helped me reflect on myself in relation to the course texts and ideas studied.

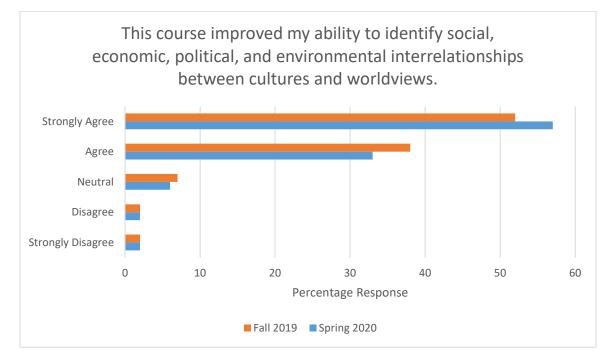| Response	Percentage Response
Strongly Agree	Fall 2019: ~42; Spring 2020: ~53
Agree	Fall 2019: ~32; Spring 2020: ~25
Neutral	Fall 2019: ~16; Spring 2020: ~14
Disagree	Fall 2019: ~6; Spring 2020: ~5
Strongly Disagree	Fall 2019: ~4; Spring 2020: ~3

Percentage Response

■ Fall 2019   ■ Spring 2020

Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity

Average response rate: Fall 2019 = 30%; Spring 2020 = 30%

Q1. This course improved my ability to identify social, economic, political, and environmental interrelationships between cultures and worldviews.

Fall n=392; Spring n=365

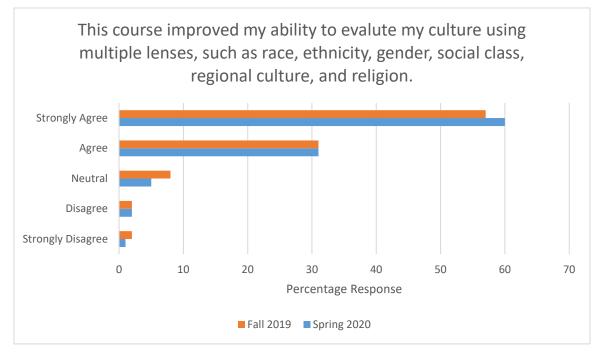**This course improved my ability to identify social, economic, political, and environmental interrelationships between cultures and worldviews.**

Response	Percentage Response
Strongly Agree	Fall 2019: ~52; Spring 2020: ~57
Agree	Fall 2019: ~38; Spring 2020: ~33
Neutral	Fall 2019: ~7; Spring 2020: ~6
Disagree	Fall 2019: ~2; Spring 2020: ~2
Strongly Disagree	Fall 2019: ~2; Spring 2020: ~2

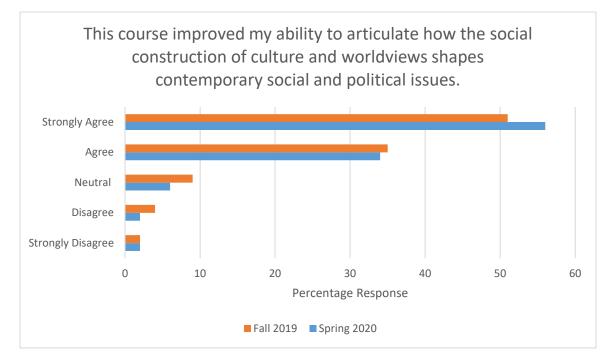Percentage Response

■ Fall 2019   ■ Spring 2020

Q2. This course improved my ability to evaluate my culture using multiple lenses, such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, regional culture, and religion.

Fall n=391; Spring n=367

This course improved my ability to evalute my culture using multiple lenses, such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, regional culture, and religion.

Percentage Response

■ Fall 2019 ■ Spring 2020

Q3. This course improved my ability to articulate how the social construction of culture and worldviews shapes contemporary social and political issues.

Fall n=391; Spring n=367

This course improved my ability to articulate how the social construction of culture and worldviews shapes contemporary social and political issues.

Percentage Response

■ Fall 2019 ■ Spring 2020

Direct Artifact Assessment

<u>Literary Studies</u>

Faculty submitted 90 usable artifacts from 18 of the 20 courses for evaluation in the Literary Studies array. Of these artifacts, 72% came from 200-level courses. The distribution is shown in the table below.

Artifact distribution by course level

100	200	300	400	Unknown*
0	65	5	5	15

*some artifacts were submitted with course information redacted

Three of the four category learning objectives were represented, with no artifacts clearly aligning to category learning outcome 4. Results showed the most frequent level of mastery in the category to be Milestone 1, with more than half of artifacts rated at or above this level for at least one outcome. Ratings are displayed in the table below. Note that some artifacts aligned with more than one outcome.

n=90 (out of 100 possible)

	C	M2	M1	B	BB*	N/A*	Total
LO 1: Demonstrate aesthetic responsiveness and interpretive ability.	1 2%	8 18%	15 33%	13 29%	8 18%	0 0%	45 50%
LO 2: Connect writings to their literary, cultural, and historical contexts.	1 3%	9 30%	9 30%	6 20%	2 7%	3 10%	30 33%
LO3: Employ literature to analyze issues and answers questions relating to human experience, systems, and the physical environment.	0 0%	15 33.5%	20 44.5%	5 11%	0 0%	5 11%	45 50%
LO 4: Reflect on themselves as products of and participants in traditions of literature and ideas.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Performance Level Totals	2	32	44	24	10	8	

*Ratings of BB were sometimes influenced by the structure of the assignment and misalignment to outcomes. N/A indicated missing or incomplete work.

All Below Benchmark ratings came from 200-level courses.

Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity

Faculty submitted 55 usable artifacts from 11 of the 18 courses in the GPCD array. Of these artifacts, 63% came from 100-level courses. The distribution is shown in the table below.

Artifact distribution by course level

100	200	300	400	Unknown*
35	10	5	0	5

*some artifacts were submitted with course information redacted

All four category learning objectives were represented, though some with weak linkages that will be discussed further. Results showed the most frequent level of mastery in the category to be Benchmark, followed by Below Benchmark. Volunteer raters indicated Below Benchmark performances were often attributed to poor alignment between assignments and category learning outcomes 1-3 that may have limited the possible scope of student performance relative the rubric. Ratings are displayed in the table below. Note that some artifacts aligned with more than one outcome.

n=55 (out of 90 possible)

	C	M2	M1	B	BB	N/A	Total
LO 1: Develop a basic understanding of one's culture in comparison to another culture or language.	0 0%	2 13%	3 20%	7 47%	3 20%	0 0%	15 28%
LO 2: Use multiple lenses, such as race and ethnicity, gender, social class, regional culture, and religion to evaluate one's culture in comparison to those studied.	0 0%	2 13%	5 33.5%	3 20%	5 33.5%	0 0%	15 28%
LO3:	0	1	7	4	8	0	20

Critically examine issues of cultural differences, societal values, and relationship, and evaluate one's own culture and value systems through comparison and contrast to the target language or culture.	0%	5%	35%	20%	40%	0%	36%
LO 4: Use the target language or culture in developing an understanding of the world today.	2 6%	6 17%	5 14%	13 37%	9 26%	0 0%	35 64%
Performance Level Totals	2	11	20	27	25	0	

Distribution of ratings by course level was fairly consistent across course levels.

C. Assessment of Student Learning Discussion

Indirect Measures

Student responses to perception surveys about their learning in their GPCD and Literary Studies classes were of interest. In both categories, students had positive perceptions of their own learning, with over 50% believing they showed strong performance in meeting the learning outcomes. While student perceptions and the reality of what was found in their writing aligned well in the Literary Studies category (where many students met Milestone 1 and 2), this was less the case in GPCD. Though students in GPCD also mostly believed they met the learning objectives strongly or at least satisfactorily, many students actually performed at Benchmark level in this category. As discussed in Direct Artifact Assessment, it is highly likely this is due to misalignment of assignments with learning objectives.

Direct Artifact Assessment

Many insights were gained about student learning, as well as the new assessment process. Primary insights are discussed below.

Student Learning Outcome Achievement

- The first look at the data raised the question of whether these findings were positive or reflective of UCC expectations. While Milestone 1 and Benchmark ratings may seem low in the overall scope of performances on the rubrics, many students taking these courses are first-year or sophomore students, and many will take only one course in the category. It was determined that these ratings are as expected.
- Raising the ratings for GPCD is a question to be explored further. Limitations influenced by the smaller sample size and weak alignment between outcomes and assignments make it difficult to draw accurate conclusions about student performance. Additionally, it is

noted that with the bulk of GPCD courses coming from the 100 level, it may be unreasonable to expect the depth reflected in the rubric to be achieved in these courses. Finally, noted concerns with the language in outcomes 1-3 expecting students to compare their learning about other cultures to their own will be further explored.

Process Challenges

- It is clear that sampling strategies must be improved to yield more artifacts from clearly-aligned assignments that account for all of the category learning outcomes. Recommendations include over-sampling, additional training with category faculty to ensure understanding of the process and alignment of outcomes to assignments, and better upfront identification of outcomes aligned with assignments using annotations.
- There were no limitations placed on the type of assignment from which faculty could submit artifacts. Faculty were instructed to select assignments that allowed students to demonstrate the breadth of performances on the rubric related to the aligned learning outcomes. Evaluation of the artifacts revealed that some types of assignments were not conducive to this goal. Discussion boards were particularly limited in the student performances that could be displayed. Considerations for limitations to assignment type will be discussed further.
- Employing the rubrics to evaluate artifacts revealed challenges related to language and content. Specifically, the Literary Studies rubric used language that required a student to perform the action/skill in multiple ways using the word "and" rather than the word "or." Students who clearly demonstrated mastery in their work were not always rated at the appropriate level due to missing one component of the outcome. This was addressed by an ad-hoc committee to improve language for better evaluation. The GPCD rubric challenges related more to the content of the outcomes and a related consistent lack of alignment with assignments. It was noted that outcomes should not simply be changed because faculty are not teaching to or assessing them; however, more discussion about concerns with the content of the outcomes should follow.

Based on the feedback of faculty teaching within the GPCD category, an ad-hoc committee comprised of assessment personnel and faculty has been meeting to adjust the learning outcomes for GPCD to better reflect the very diverse array of courses in both Global Perspective and the often significantly different Cultural Diversity areas. The ad hoc committee has agreed upon 2 outcomes that all GPCD courses should meet, and is in the process of identifying 4 other outcomes (2 representing GP and 2 representing CD) from which faculty could choose. Though the category will have 6 learning outcomes, faculty will only be using 4 for their courses. This will give faculty more flexibility while maintaining the common themes and goals of the overall category in place. New objectives will be shared with faculty teaching in the category this summer.

V. Actions and Next Steps

A. Review of Courses, CLOS and Inventory

The Dean and Leadership Team were concerned that the evaluation of syllabi was limited to whether FS policies and outcomes were listed in the syllabi. In order to afford more rigorous evaluation of courses, syllabi would need to be annotated to show the alignment of course work to the category learning objectives. This was clearly borne out in the GPCD category, where misalignment of assignments with learning objectives was evident. Demonstrating this alignment might be done in two ways: 1) require that instructors submit annotated syllabi each semester when required, or 2) require that annotated syllabi be submitted when the category opens for consideration of new and existing courses. The UCC determined that its own policy required categories to open at the end of each category assessment, and thus, the second option would automatically occur. There was discussion about the timing of requiring instructors to submit annotated syllabi in all categories (given that instructors are tasked already with responding to teaching during a pandemic).

In response to the results of assessment for Literary Studies and Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity, the UCC took the following immediate actions in the area of CLOs:

- Approved creation of an ad hoc committee to make minor revisions to the Literary Studies rubric.
- Determined that the evidence that faculty are asking students to meet LO4 is sufficient not to make further changes to the LOs. Fall workshops will address this LO with faculty.
- Approved creation of an ad hoc committee to revise the outcomes for the Global Perspectives and Culture Diversity category. The ad hoc committee was charged with developing outcomes that would include paths, Global Perspectives and Culture Diversity.

B. Assessment of Student Learning

The results of the category assessment for Literary Studies and Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity were discussed in UCC over the course of four meetings. The UCC considered in particular whether the median student outcomes were appropriate for each category (it agreed that they were in the case of Literary Studies), and whether the rubric and interpretation of Learning Objectives led to lower outcomes in the case of Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity. In particular, the UCC was concerned that faculty teaching in GPCD were not always aware of the current outcomes (approved in 2018), and that there were many cases of assignments not aligning clearly with the learning objective. During the discussions, the UCC heard concerns from Council members teaching in the category that the outcomes adopted in 2018 relied heavily on comparison with the student's own culture. There were disciplinary disagreements about the effectiveness of requiring students to compare a different/newly-learned culture with their own. These concerns ranged from the position that comparison could reinforce student perceptions that Western/American cultures are superior to other cultures, or that students in lower-level courses do not yet have the tools to perceive their own culture critically. The UCC initially agreed to make minor revisions to the LOs to reduce the number of times that comparison with one's own culture is required. The Dean considered whether it would be prudent for an ad hoc committee to explore the separation of the category into two areas. However, the UCC finally agreed that a different tack could work, namely splitting the outcomes

into two paths: Global Perspectives and Cultural Diversity. All courses would be required to meet two common learning objectives, while two others learning objectives could be required based on the path that fits the course. The UCC did note its concern that students taking courses at the 100 level would mean their individual outcome for GPCD would likely be Benchmark and not higher.

For the Literary Studies category, while the UCC was satisfied with the level of student learning in these courses, it was also supportive of workshops that would allow faculty to consider ways in which student attainment of outcomes might be improved to Milestone 2. The UCC determined that the majority of students took the LS category course in sophomore year or later, and thus, more students meeting Milestone 2 could be an aspirational goal. The Department of Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics agreed to cancel the LAT 101/LAT 215 freshman learning community in order to ensure that students take a course in the LS category later in their program, not as freshmen.

VI.   Conclusions

The UCC, Leadership Team and Assessment Team were pleased with the results of the first complete assessment cycle. While there are areas in which the processes could be refined, generally processes were smooth and yielded useful findings. The Assessment of Student Learning provided meaningful information, both in terms of actual student performance, and the alignment of courses with learning objectives. The vast majority of faculty teaching in the two categories met their obligation to submit artifacts. While participation in the planning workshops was not as strong as the Assessment and Leadership Teams would have liked, they expect participation to grow as faculty understand the shift in culture necessitated by the assessment plan. Also, a solid group of members of the UCC and faculty teaching in the categories participated in Assessment Day, indicating a strong commitment to assessment among FS faculty.

The Leadership Team hopes that the assessment cycle will allow faculty to participate in communities of practice around categories in which they teach courses. There seemed to be some interest among faculty who participated in the workshops in continuing such participation. Also expressed was the need for faculty new to teaching in the Foundational Studies Program to have an orientation and access to such communities of practice. The Leadership Team was unable to receive a place on the agenda for New Faculty Orientation in 2019, and thus recognizes that it must conduct its own orientation sessions. However, doing so will build on the robust work completed this year.

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[i] The final report was completed by Ann Rider, Bailey Bridgewater, and Kelley Woods-Johnson.
[ii] The Leadership Team wishes to acknowledge the work of past chairs and members of the UCC, and in particular, Chris Fischer, who led many of the previous assessment initiatives. The foundation they laid made the current plan not only possible, but also successful.