

PROPOSAL TO ADOPT UNIVERSITY-WIDE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Fall 2019

Introduction

At the last external accreditation review of Iowa State University by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the lack of clearly-defined university-wide Student Outcomes was identified as an area of concern. In addition to having outcomes identified, HLC criterion 4 requires that institutions assess student learning outcomes and use the results of those assessments to improve student achievement of those learning outcomes. To resolve this problem, the Faculty Senate Outcomes and Assessment Committee (a committee of the Academic Affairs Council) was charged with the following: 1) review the current outcomes, goals, and assessment practices of ISU's undergraduate academic programs and 2) develop a set of overarching learning outcomes that are consistent with the current outcomes, goals, and assessment practices. The overarching university-wide outcomes proposed would apply to all undergraduate students at ISU, ~~and individual colleges would be charged with providing the appropriate artifacts that assess the achievement of these learning outcomes by students in a manner that is appropriate to each college or discipline, following recommended best practices.~~

This proposal recommends the adoption of four university-wide student learning outcomes in the areas of Communication, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking & Problem Solving, and [Diversity and Global Citizenship](#) for endorsement and approval of the Faculty Senate.

Process

The Faculty Senate Outcomes and Assessment (OA) Committee, composed of representatives of all ISU colleges and from the Provost Office, reviewed current student learning outcomes described in the University Catalog and in published college documents to assess the breadth and scope of outcomes for each college. These outcomes were compared within and among colleges, and this comparison assisted in the identification of common learning outcomes among all undergraduate degree programs. The OA Committee's objective was to propose overarching learning outcomes for all ISU undergraduate students that would be acceptable to satisfy HLC university-wide outcomes requirements, and are consistent with learning outcomes and objectives that have been adopted by ISU colleges. The four university student learning outcomes identified were developed based on the existing outcomes stated for each college and are designed to synthesize those objectives into a set of general learning outcomes that would be beneficial to all students. These learning outcomes have been reviewed and approved by the Academic Affairs Council, and are now presented to the Faculty Senate for review and approval.

The proposed university-wide learning outcomes that follow have also been presented in the accompanying document in more detail (including specific language used by each college where available), providing the information used to develop them, and the rationale of how these recommended outcomes were determined by the Committee.

Proposed University-Wide Learning Outcomes

The following four areas have been identified as common learning outcomes that the Committee feels are consistent with those presently used by colleges; these also align with the present university academic requirements for all ISU undergraduate students in the areas of communication (English 150 and 250), information literacy (Library 160), and U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives.

1. Communication

Outcome: Students graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree will have acquired knowledge and skills to communicate effectively ~~in their field of study.~~

Students will be able to effectively communicate information using written, oral, visual or electronic forms of communication.

Evidence of proficiency in communication appropriate to a discipline may be demonstrated at the college and department or program level. In addition to completing the required English 150 and 250 courses, each college or program has the freedom to select additional courses or evidence related to communication that their graduates are expected to complete if appropriate to the discipline, but such requirements are not part of the university's outcomes reported to the HLC. ~~each college or program has the freedom but is not required to select additional courses or evidence that their graduates are expected to complete in order to demonstrate proficiency in the communication outcome more specific to the given discipline.~~

Institutional goal: Every student (100%) graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree will meet the proficiency level in English 150 and 250 or have record of an equivalent if transfer credits were deemed equivalent when the student entered the institution.

2. Information Literacy

Outcome: Students graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree will have acquired knowledge and skills in information literacy.

Students will be able to acquire, interpret, and synthesize information from multiple sources within and beyond their field of study.

Evidence of proficiency in information literacy appropriate to a discipline may be demonstrated at the college and department or program level. In addition to completing the required Library 160 course, each college or program has the freedom to select additional courses or evidence related to information literacy that their graduates are expected to complete if appropriate to the discipline, but such requirements are not part of the university's outcomes reported to HLC. ~~each college or program has the freedom but is not required to select additional courses or evidence that their graduates are expected to complete in order to demonstrate proficiency in the information literacy outcome more specific to the given discipline.~~

Institutional goal: Every student (100%) graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree will meet the proficiency level in information literacy based on a passing (S) grade in Library 160 or have record of an equivalent if transfer credits were deemed equivalent when the student entered the institution.

3. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Outcome: Students graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree will have acquired knowledge and skills to demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking and problem solving ~~as appropriate to their field of study.~~

Students will be able to generate, acquire, and evaluate information based on scientific evidence, creative processes, and/or logical and ethical reasoning to a) design a system, component, and/or process to meet desired needs within realistic constraints such as economic, environmental, social, political, ethical, health, safety, manufacturability, and sustainability and/or b) make decisions, solve problems and synthesize information in one's personal, professional and community endeavors.

Evidence of proficiency in critical thinking appropriate to a discipline may be demonstrated at the college and department or program level. Each college or program has the freedom to select additional courses or evidence that their graduates are expected to complete, but such requirements are not part of the university's outcomes reported to HLC.~~Each college or program has the freedom to select appropriate courses or evidence that their graduates are expected to complete in order to demonstrate proficiency in the critical thinking and problem solving outcome specific to the given discipline.~~

Institutional goal: Every student (100%) graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree will meet the university's proficiency level in critical thinking/problem solving ~~as defined by college-level outcomes~~by successfully completing a course from a list that the colleges have identified as appropriate for meeting the university's learning outcome.

4. Diversity and Global Citizenship

Outcome: Students graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree will have acquired knowledge and skills to be effective citizens in a culturally diverse global community.

Students will gain an appreciation of the importance of having a global perspective on issues involving the role of human society, with its various complex functions and relationships. This includes developing fundamental knowledge of political, economic, social, and cultural differences seen within the global community, and having the ability to analyze and evaluate issues within society in an informed, open-minded, just, and ethical manner. Students will be able to appreciate diversity in all of its forms (ethnic, racial, country of origin, cultural, economic, etc.) and have developed skills to become engaged, vibrant, and responsible citizens that can contribute constructively to society, at the local, national, or global levels.

Evidence of proficiency in global citizenship may be demonstrated at the college and department or program level. In addition to completing the required US Diversity ~~AND/or~~ International Perspectives coursework, each college or program has the freedom to select additional courses or evidence that their graduates are expected to complete, but such requirements are not part of the university's outcomes reported to HLC.~~each college or program has the freedom but is not required to select additional courses or evidence that their graduates are expected to complete in order to demonstrate proficiency in the global citizenship outcome more specific to the given discipline.~~

Institutional goal: Every student (100%) graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree will ~~meet the proficiency level as identified in a~~ demonstrate proficiency by successfully completing US Diversity ~~and/or~~ International Perspectives requirements~~approved courses or have record of an equivalent if transfer credits were deemed equivalent when the student entered the institution.~~

Proposed Assessment Methods

For purposes of reporting to HLC, the university shall use information already available to the registrar's office. Nothing in this document abridges the right of colleges and programs to set higher standards as appropriate to their fields, but such requirements are separate from the university outcomes reported to HLC. Given the four stated learning outcomes, ~~a variety of suggested but optional assessment methods have been proposed using the courses identified in the institutional goals may use the optional~~ ~~both~~ direct and indirect assessment methods, along with best practices and Value Rubrics suggested by The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and other assessment metrics. These potential methods of assessment for the university-wide outcomes are explained in the accompanying OA Committee Report, ~~and are intended to provide information for colleges to establish optional mechanisms to include the assessment of these outcomes in concert with other college- or program-specific outcomes assessments already in use.~~

Follow-up Actions

Upon approval and adoption of university-wide learning outcomes for undergraduate students at Iowa State University by the Faculty Senate, there is a subsequent need for revision of the *Faculty Handbook*, Section 10.7.2 to bring the language of this section into alignment with current assessment practices being done at the university, and to better reference the adopted learning outcomes. Specific recommendations for revision of Section 10.7.2 will be submitted to the Faculty Senate in cooperation with the Governance Council in the near future following adoption of the proposed learning outcomes included in this document.

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Institutional goal: Every student (100%) graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree will demonstrate proficiency by successfully completing US Diversity and International Perspectives requirements.

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