Form E-1-A for Boston College Undergraduate Programs

Program: UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC CORE

1) Have formal learning outcomes been developed? What are they? (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect its majors to have acquired before they graduate?)

The desired learning outcomes of the undergraduate core program are of two kinds: general learning outcomes of the core program taken as a whole, and more specialized outcomes proper to the various core requirements.

The basic or general learning outcomes of the undergraduate core program are the following:

a. Students will be able to identify and discuss the questions and issues that are fundamental to human inquiry.

b. Students will understand the major ideas and methods of inquiry of the disciplines that comprise their intellectual heritage.

c. Students will show a grasp of the breadth and diversity of human knowledge.

d. Students will show a grasp of how the principal disciplines organize knowledge, how they are related to each other, and how different disciplines bring distinctive perspectives to bear on the same issues or problems.

e. Students will show familiarity with the scholarly exploration of religious faith.

f. Students will show that they have developed the critical, mathematical, analytic, and expressive skills that are essential tools of the educated person.

g. Students will show that the core has made a difference in their lives, and in particular that they have learned to examine their values and to integrate what they learn with the principles that guide their lives.

The more specialized outcomes proper to the various core requirements are spelled out in a series of cover pages, which also incorporate the basic or general learning outcomes stated above. For the use of these cover pages, see items 3 and 4 below.

2) Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific. (Where are the department’s learning expectations accessible to potential majors: on the web or in the catalog or in your department’s major handouts?)

Learning outcomes a. through g. are drawn from Section II of the 1991 Core Task Force Report, "The Core in the Context of Jesuit Education," available on the Boston College Website. These basic goals are further elaborated in section III, "Goals and Characteristics of the Core Curriculum," and section IV, "Content of the Core."
3) Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree? What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes are being achieved more or less well?

Other data considered besides student GPAs include: core course syllabi (including cover pages explaining how courses address both general core goals and the goals of particular core requirements), departmental reports of core course assessment, samples of student work from core courses (gathered by departments), samples of student work from Capstone courses, samples of student theses, publications, and other creative work, and samples of student responses from university-wide senior surveys.

4) Who interprets the evidence? What is the process? (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

The University Core Development Committee (UCDC) is responsible for overseeing assessment of the undergraduate core. The primary locus for this assessment is the individual core departments. The UCDC is responsible for encouraging, monitoring, and supporting departmental assessment of core courses and for keeping the dean, provost, and other officials informed about the state of the core.

It is understood that departments will regularly gather syllabi from their faculty and that syllabi for core courses will be accompanied by cover sheets explaining how the courses are designed to meet both the general core goals and the more specialized outcomes proper to the various core requirements.

The UCDC plans to review core departments on a three-year cycle:

Year 1: English and other departments servicing the Literature core, Writing, History, Fine Arts, Music, and Theater.

Year 2: Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Physics, Psychology.

Year 3: Philosophy, Theology, Honors and other interdisciplinary programs, Economics, Political Science, and Sociology.

Courses fulfilling the core requirement in Cultural Diversity will be reviewed in the course of reviewing the departments that sponsor them.

Core courses offered by schools other than Arts and Sciences will be reviewed along with Arts and Sciences courses that fulfill the same core requirements.

For these triennial reviews the UCDC considers not only the departmental reports on core assessment but also the syllabi for core courses (with their accompanying cover sheets explaining how the courses are designed to meet both the general core goals and the more specialized outcomes proper to the various core requirements), samples of student product gathered by departments from the core courses, and samples of student responses about the core courses, also gathered by departments.

The UCDC also considers, on an ongoing basis, departmental requests that courses be approved for core credit. Departments submitting such requests are required to fill out cover sheets explaining how the
courses are designed to meet both the general core goals and the more specialized outcomes proper to the various core requirements.

On an annual or semiannual basis the UCDC reports its findings and recommendations to relevant individuals (e.g., the Provost, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and the Dean of Arts and Sciences) and bodies (e.g., the Board of Arts and Sciences Chairs, the Arts and Sciences Educational Policy Committee, the University Council on Teaching). As requested, the UCDC also reports to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees.

5) What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence? (Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? Why were they made?)

TBD

6) What evidence do you have that the changes have resulted in improved learning outcomes?

TBD

7) Date of the most recent program review. (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

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