

The Neumann University Core Experience

May 2019

Newsletter

Volume 8, Issue 1

Dear Colleagues,

This newsletter summarizes the approved Core Signature Assignment Guidelines and the Curriculum proposals approved by Faculty Senate and the Vice President of Academic Affairs in April and May 2019. It is essential that every undergraduate faculty member (full-time and adjunct) and all advisors understand the directives.

The following changes apply to every undergraduate faculty member (full-time and adjunct) and to all undergraduate courses:

- Every syllabus must include the Neumann University approved statement about Professional Writing** included in this newsletter.
- The syllabus for courses that provide artifacts as part of the undergraduate Core assessment must include the Core Signature Assignment, developed according to the Core Signature Assignment Guidelines* provided. N.B. The Core assessment focus for 2019-2020 is Contemplation and Conscience.
- Beginning with first year students who enter Neumann University in Fall 2019, all students will be required to take a Diversity-certified course. Faculty members are invited to construct such courses and apply for diversity-certification following the process described below. In order to provide enough diversity-certified courses for incoming students, Diversity-certified Task Force members are available to meet as soon as possible with faculty to assist in the application process.
- Beginning with first year students who enter Neumann University in Fall 2019, students will be required to take one 3-credit Foreign Language course or a Computer Science or Bioinformatics course. Please review the Foreign Language Core Course Placement guidelines in the Admissions section of the undergraduate catalog. The major program may specify the most relevant language option.

Sr. Patricia Hutchison, OSF

CORE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE 2018-2019

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2019-2020 Core Assessment

Introduction and Overview of Revisions to the Undergraduate Core Program

During the 2016-2017 academic year, the Undergraduate Core Experience underwent the required Five-year Program review. In November 2017, an external review of the Core Program was conducted.

The Evaluation team offered several recommendations, including:

- *To promote student understanding of the distinctiveness, purpose, and outcomes of the Core Experience Program, each major program should review its Core course map in order to re-familiarize itself with which courses it had established as part of the Core assessment process.*
- *To ensure that all faculty understand the Core philosophy and learning outcomes and participate appropriately in the assessment process, all syllabi should make explicit the connection between the course and the Core learning outcomes.*
- *To improve student achievement, signature assignments based on common guidelines should be used for the assessment of Core learning outcomes.*
- *To promote writing across the curriculum as a priority, each major program should designate one or two courses as “writing intensive.”*
- *To meet the learning outcomes relating to cultural diversity, each student should take at least one diversity-certified course, selected from a list of approved options. In addition, there should be a specific application process for a course to be accepted and designated as a “diversity” course.*
- *The purpose and need for the Core Language course requirement should be evaluated, and the concept of “language” should be interpreted more broadly.*
- *A clear plan for assessing technological competency should be developed with technological competence embedded intentionally across the curriculum.*
- *The application of competency-based education for fulfillment of Core learning outcomes for non-traditional students should be examined, and the transfer student orientation should be strengthened to enhance students’ understanding of the Core experience and the importance of engagement and involvement on campus.*

The Core Committee and Dr. DiPaolo examined the Evaluation Team’s recommendations and developed a plan to address the recommendations. In February 2018, the Core Committee conducted sessions to acquaint faculty with the major recommendations that would require curriculum changes and Faculty Senate approval. Task Forces were appointed to develop proposals related to Writing Intensive courses and Diversity-certified courses. In addition, the Core Committee discussed and approved the recommendation related to broadening the concept of Language to include Computer Science and Bioinformatics for certain majors. The Core Committee also developed guidelines for signature assignments used for the assessment of Core Learning Outcomes. The Core Committee will continue to develop responses to the other recommendations.

Core Signature Assignment Guidelines*

During their review of the Core program, the Evaluation Team discovered that some of the artifacts submitted for assessment were not connected with the rubrics used to assess the learning outcomes. The Evaluation Team recommended that the Core Committee develop guidelines for signature assignments and that faculty members design appropriate signature assignments based on the guidelines. The rationale for the guidelines and the guidelines developed and approved by the Core Committee follow:

Rationale for Core Signature Assignment Guidelines

1. What is a Core signature assignment?

A Core signature assignment is an assignment that gives students an opportunity to demonstrate how well they achieve a specific Core learning outcome. A signature assignment is included in a course every time the course is taught and is clearly identified as such on the syllabus, using the designation CSA (Core Signature Assignment). Faculty include the assignment in the student's overall grade using a rubric of their choosing. It is appropriate to use a rubric based on the Core rubric for the specific Core learning outcome.

2. When are faculty required to submit work samples as part of the Core program review?

Core learning outcomes are assessed institutionally every three years. The current assessment cycle specifies: Communication (2018-2019); Conscience and Contemplation (2019-2020); Comprehension and Compassion (2020-2021).

3. What instructions should the students receive for the assignment?

Instructions should identify the Core learning outcome related to the assignment.

Instructions should instruct students to address each feature/criteria of the rubric and should include or refer to the rubric.

Instructions should specify the length and format requirements for the paper, the preferred reference style, and the required number of references if appropriate.

Instructions should require that the conventions of English and proper attribution will be considered in grading.

4. What is a reasonable length for a CSA?

Most learning outcomes require a paper of at least 2 pages for first and second year students and at least 4 pages for junior and senior students. Oral communication assessments should provide students an opportunity to speak for 5-10 minutes. Group presentations should ensure that each student has an opportunity to speak for at least 5 minutes.

5. Other considerations.

Because the paper reflects a student's best work, students should have an opportunity to submit and revise drafts after receiving faculty feedback. Papers should be typed and where appropriate follow guidelines for in-text citations and references.

3/6/18
Revised 3/12/19

Core Outcome Signature Assignment Guidelines

The following criteria apply to courses in which Core learning outcomes are assessed in conjunction with the Core assessment at Neumann University:

A. COURSE SYLLABI

1. The specific Core learning outcomes addressed within the course must be clearly identified on the course syllabus.
2. There must be a specific assignment (identified on the syllabus) related to each outcome that is part of the Core assessment (See [NU assessment](#)).

EXAMPLE: **Available upon request.**

B. GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNMENTS RELATED TO CORE ASSESSMENT:

1. Include the rubrics used for assessment
 - a. For grading purposes, faculty may create their own rubric or use the Core outcome rubric found at the [Core Experience site](#).
 - b. For Core assessment purposes, specify the relevant Core outcome rubric found at the [Core Experience site](#).
2. All assignments MUST include clearly written instructions provided to the students
 - a. Reference to a rubric
 - b. Length of paper
 - 1) Lower level (100 and 200 level) course within the Core program: minimum 2 pages
 - 2) Upper level (300 and 400 level) course within the major program: minimum 4 pages
 - c. Grammar/ Formatting guidelines or expectations; including Times New Roman, 12-point font, double spaced, 1-inch margins.
 - d. Specified number of references and preferred reference style if applicable

C. GUIDELINES FOR ORAL ASSESSMENT:

1. Include the rubrics used for assessment
 - a. For grading purposes, faculty may create their own rubric or use the Core outcome rubric found at the [Core Experience site](#).
 - b. For Core assessment purposes, specify the relevant Core outcome rubric found on [Core Experience site](#).
2. All presentations MUST include clearly written instructions provided to the students to include:
 - a. Reference to a rubric
 - b. Expectations of content
 - c. Expectations of visual materials (if appropriate)
 - d. Expectations related to organization, PVLEGS, dress code
 - e. Length of presentation
3. Presentations should be a minimum of 5 minutes
4. Group presentations must ensure that each student within the group speaks for 5 minutes to allow for appropriate assessment.

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Faculty Senate approved Requirements for Writing Intensive Courses

In order to foster a climate that leads to improved writing skills for all undergraduate students, all faculty members will promote acceptable writing skills by:

- Establishing and using consistent definitions for writing-related terms (grammar, usage, syntax, mechanics, style, genre and disciplinary conventions, bibliography/reference list, etc.).
- Including the Neumann University approved statement about Professional Writing (see below**) on every syllabus.
- Including writing as a feature on the rubric for every graded writing assignment and assigning a score for writing on every graded writing assignment (with weight of grade at the discretion of the professor).
- Sharing and explaining to students the [Neumann University Writing rubric](#), even if faculty choose to use a different rubric for a specific course.

*** Unless otherwise instructed, all writing for courses (essays, emails, journals, on-line posts, etc.) must meet professional standards.*

All teachers will expect and grade for the following:

- *Clarity: the meaning of the sentences must be clear and logical.*
- *Development: the ideas or claims must be supported with examples or evidence.*
- *Diction, form and style must be appropriate for the subject, genre, and audience.*
- *Grammar and mechanics (punctuation, spelling, capitalization, etc.) must follow the rules of Standard English.*
- *Research must be integrated, cited and documented according to an established research style guide (such as MLA or APA).*

In addition, all Core Literature courses will become Writing Intensive and every major will designate at least one Writing Intensive course. The Undergraduate Catalog will identify these courses as Writing Intensive. The proposed change does not add courses or change existing courses. It does, however, require that Core Literature courses and the course/s designated by each major include writing as a process following the guidelines below:

- The Core learning outcome “Express ideas clearly and effectively in written form” will be included on the syllabus for Writing Intensive courses.
- The IDEA objective “8. Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing” will be indicated as *Essential* for all Writing Intensive courses.
- Class size will be capped at 20.
- Faculty may choose to participate in professional development to ensure that they are prepared to teach Writing Intensive courses; such support may involve formal workshops and/or participation in professional learning communities, such as the Faculty Senate Teaching and Learning Circle.
- A minimum of 10-15 pages of formal graded writing assignments will be required; formal graded writing assignments may vary according to the academic discipline and may include short papers, essays, research papers, lab reports, online posts, blogs, and revisions. According to the needs of the major, the writing assignments may be distributed across more than one course. N.B. This guideline does not require papers that are 10-15 pages in length; rather, the course should include a variety of assignments (e.g.

Papers, essays, research papers, lab reports, online posts, blogs), and revisions that total at least 10-15 pages.

- Content objectives of the course may be met through a variety of writing assignments.
- The course will provide multiple graded (formal) and ungraded (informal) writing opportunities integrated throughout the entire semester.
- Direct writing instruction will be an integral component of the course; i.e., students will be provided multiple opportunities to practice and improve their writing.
- Direct writing instruction approaches writing as a process that includes teacher and peer feedback and opportunities for revision.
 - ◊ Writing should be a process with students provided several “steps” to achieve a finished product.
 - ◊ At each “step” students should receive prompt and timely feedback.
 - ◊ Students should revise in light of feedback received; e.g., students may be expected to revise and re-submit the same assignment or apply feedback to another assignment.
 - ◊ Assignments should be scaffolded and scheduled in a manner that provides opportunities to incorporate feedback into revisions and/or future assignments.
 - ◊ Formal written assignments will be graded for both content and quality of the writing with a significant percentage of the grade, determined by the professor, allocated for quality of writing.
 - ◊ Directions for written assignments will be detailed and explicit to ensure that students understand what is required, including how many words/paragraphs/pages should be allocated to each part of the assignment.
 - ◊ Students should understand the [Neumann University Writing rubric](#), even if faculty choose to use a different rubric for a specific course.

To support faculty teaching Writing Intensive courses, and other faculty who wish to develop strategies that foster improvement in writing, professional development opportunities will be provided by the newly hired Director of Writing Across the Curriculum, Dr. Christina LaVecchia. Title III funds will support these professional development opportunities.

Faculty Senate approved Requirements for Diversity-certified Courses

To promote compliance with Middle States requirements related to Diversity and Cultural Awareness within the General Education program and the concerns of students and some faculty and staff, beginning in Fall 2019, the Core program for incoming students will include the requirement that students participate in a Diversity-certified course. Although it is preferable that students take a 100-200 level course in first or second year, students may take a 300-400 level course because of the structure of their major provided that all prerequisites are met.

The Diversity-certified course may be a Core course, an elective course, or a course within a major program (if such courses are open to students beyond the major). Faculty members will complete the Diversity Course application form to gain approval for certifying the course as an acceptable option to fulfill the Core Diversity requirement.

There is also a requirement that faculty members be “certified” to teach the courses. For the present, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities’ program, *Building Intercultural Competence for Catholic Colleges and Universities*, will be used to certify faculty. In the future, faculty certification might include the following:

- Participation in *Building Intercultural Competence for Catholic Colleges and Universities* or a similar workshop
- Completion of programs in Diversity and Cultural Awareness related to professional licensure
- Evidence of successful teaching of Diversity-certified courses through student evaluations and assessment of student artifacts.

In addition, to encourage active engagement, reflection, and stimulating discussions, it is recommended that classes be capped at 20.

Certification of an existing course as a Core option to fulfill the Diversity requirement is separate from approval of a new course; approval of a new course is reserved for the academic divisions. After approval by the academic division, a new course may be considered for diversity certification.

The Neumann University Core Experience section of the undergraduate catalog will be revised to reflect the Diversity-certified course requirement and approved courses will receive the Diversity-certified designation.

Please see the Diversity-certified Course application and the Diversity and Cultural Awareness VALUE rubric included with this newsletter as Appendix A and Appendix B.

Faculty Senate approved Changes to the Core Language Requirement

In response to recommendations from the Five-year Core program review that occurred in November 2017, the concept of “language” will be interpreted broadly to include Computer Science and Bioinformatics as language options. **The revised Core language requirement that will be included in the Catalog will state:**

Language 3 credits

One Foreign Language course at the Elementary II level or higher or an approved Computer Science or Bioinformatics course satisfies this Core requirement. The major program may specify the language option that is most relevant to the major. Language at the Elementary I level counts toward General Elective credit. Questions should be referred to the Academic Advisor and/or the Faculty Advisor in the major.

For alternative ways to satisfy the Foreign Language requirement, refer to the “Foreign Language Core Course Placement” section in the Admissions portion of the Undergraduate Catalog. Questions can also be directed to the professor who teaches the specific language course.

N.B. The following Language requirement Catalog statement will be retained with a note that the requirement applies to students who entered the University prior to Fall 2019.

Modern Language & Diversity

3 credits

One Modern Language course at the Elementary II level or higher satisfies this Core requirement. Modern Language at the Elementary I level counts toward General Elective credit.

See alternative ways to satisfy the Modern Language Core Requirement in the Neumann University Catalog. Questions should be referred to the professor who teaches the language.

Additional Note about Core Language Outcome

The 2012 Core revision eliminated a learning outcome related to language acquisition. Because the approved change requires a Language outcome, the Catalog copy in the Communication section of the Core learning outcomes will be revised as follows (revision in italics):

Communication: Communicate effectively

Express ideas clearly and effectively in spoken and written form; use technology competently; access, evaluate, cite, and credit information using accepted conventions; and *demonstrate competency in a language relevant to the major program.*

2019-2020 CORE ASSESSMENT

During the 2019-2020 academic year, the focus of the Core assessment will be the outcomes associated with Contemplation and Conscience.

Contemplation: Engage in meaningful reflection

- LO 2.1 Apply the principles and values of the Catholic Franciscan tradition to personal, professional, and societal questions and issues
- LO 2.2 Engage in self-reflection
- LO 2.3 Embrace life-long learning
- LO 2.4 Discern career and vocational choices
- LO 2.5 Recognize and appreciate creative expression.

Conscience: Act ethically and responsibly

- LO 3.1 Demonstrate personal, professional, and academic honesty
- LO 3.2 Accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions
- LO 3.3 Engage as responsible members and leaders of diverse groups
- LO 3.4 Exercise ethical decision-making, informed by the Catholic Franciscan tradition, in a variety of settings.

Required artifacts for Contemplation include reflections from Theology 104 and upper level theology courses; transformation papers usually written in the senior capstone course; and artifacts from Fine Arts Core courses. Required artifacts for Conscience include reflections and/or analyses from Philosophy 102, Business Ethics, Criminal Justice Ethics, and the course that integrates ethical reasoning in major programs. Faculty members have received reminders about the artifacts needed for the assessment of these Core learning outcomes. In addition, any course that requires a project in which students work in teams is invited to have students complete a survey reflecting on the quality of the teamwork.