

Liberal Studies Students' Ability to Draw Interdisciplinary Connections

Liberal Studies BA - College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Step 1: Student Learning Outcome

Explain interdisciplinary connections among and within the three subject areas: arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences.

Step 2: Methods and Measures

Direct Measure: Each instructor in LBST 401 administers a comparable essay addressing interdisciplinary connections among or within the three subject areas: arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences. Prior to assigning essays, faculty consult and agree on degree of difficulty with topics varying in different sections. A shared assessment rubric is applied. Faculty conduct a norming session to calibrate the grading rubric and to ensure inter-rater reliability. Students are rated at the, Beginning, Developing, Competent, and Accomplished level.

Indirect Assessment: Exit survey with questions designed to assess the effectiveness of the Liberal Studies program and measure various outcomes. The following question on the survey applies:

“To what extent did the Liberal Studies core courses teach you to explain interdisciplinary connections among and within the three subject areas: arts and humanities, social sciences, natural sciences?”

Step 3: Criteria for Success

Direct Measure: Learning Outcome is satisfactorily achieved if at least 80% of the students rate as “competent” or “accomplished.”

Indirect Measure: Learning Outcome is satisfactorily achieved if at least 80% of the students respond to the relevant exit exam question with options “high” or “very high.”

Step 4: Results

Direct Measure: 34.4% of the students reached “accomplished,” 40.6% reached “competent” and 25.0% were rated as “developing.” None were rated as “beginning.” As a result, the department achieved a success rate of 75%, which is below the recommended target of 80%.

Indirect Measure: Total number of students that responded to the exit questionnaire with options d or e (high or very high) = 66 (82.5%), which is above the recommended target of 80%.

Step 5: Improvement Actions

Although the direct assessment (essay question on exam) fell below the criteria of success (80%), the department decided that the success rate of 75% does not warrant a change in the curriculum due to the small sample size.

When assessing goal four during the next assessment cycle, the assessment committee will incorporate data from both spring of year three and fall of year four to ensure that the sample size is sufficient.