

## STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

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**PROGRAM: Liberal Studies (BA)**

**SUBMITTED BY: DR. ROBERT OTTEN, CHAIR, LIBERAL STUDIES**

**DATE: 10/20/2016**

**BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED:** The documents used in this report are stored in the office of the chair of Liberal Studies. They include the Spring 2016 syllabus for the required LS 420 courses (see Appendix); copies of the Spring 2016 student senior theses evaluated (13); the completed evaluation forms (13) and the written summary evaluation provided for each student (13); and data from the “2015 Alumni Survey-by Program” and the “2015-2016 Graduating Student Survey,” as tabulated by the Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (see Appendix).

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Program description from the Course Catalog:** Please copy and paste the current year’s catalog description of this program. This is generally a one-two paragraph description immediately following the name of the program. Please be sure to include the listing of program outcomes as printed.

**From the 2016-2017 Catalog:** Liberal studies is unique at Marymount in that it provides a broad general education and the opportunity to gain knowledge in two major fields, designated as concentrations. Some examples of concentration options are biology/physical sciences, business and related fields, communication, English, fine and applied arts, gender and society, graphic design, history, humanities, information technology, mathematics, philosophy/religious studies/theology, politics, and psychology/sociology/criminal justice. Other concentrations may be considered.

Liberal studies can serve as a degree completion program for transfer and nontraditional students with previously earned college credits and full-time work experience. The program provides an efficient way to maximize the number of transfer credits and/or shorten the time required for graduation in a single discipline. The program is also desirable for students who have more than one specialized interest, have altered their career goals, or want to change their major.

The liberal studies program consists of three components: the Liberal Arts Core, the two concentrations, and the liberal studies triad ([LS 300](#), [LS 400](#), and [LS 420](#)).

Upon successful completion of the liberal studies program, students will be able to

- demonstrate appropriate levels of knowledge of content from two areas of concentration;
- apply and integrate methods from different disciplines in research and analysis that examine an issue from multiple perspectives, effectively incorporating and synthesizing information from two different disciplines;
- find, use, and evaluate a variety of sources of information and demonstrate competence in a documentation style appropriate to their discipline;
- produce a well-structured and well-written argumentative essay of substantial length that supports students' claims, evaluates opposing and/or alternate viewpoints, and reaches a conclusion logically arising from the discussion;
- communicate ideas clearly in an oral presentation, defending conclusions effectively and responding extempore to questions and critiques; and
- demonstrate an understanding of the value of lifelong learning by articulating how educational experiences relate to careers and daily life.

The e-portfolio contains a collection of experiential and scholarly writings, including a lengthy senior thesis. The topic of this paper involves the student in conducting scholarly research integrating knowledge of the student’s two fields of concentration. The e-portfolio is often sent to prospective employers to demonstrate students' high level of research and writing skills and knowledge of the controversial issues in their fields of concentration.



List all of the program’s learning outcomes: *(regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)*

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year	Year of Next Planned Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrate appropriate levels of knowledge of content from two areas of concentration;</li> </ul>	new		2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>apply and integrate methods from different disciplines in research and analysis that examine an issue from multiple perspectives, effectively incorporating and synthesizing information from two different disciplines;</li> </ul>	new	2016	2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>find, use, and evaluate a variety of sources of information and demonstrate competence in a documentation style appropriate to their discipline;</li> </ul>	new	2016	2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produce a well-structured and well-written argumentative essay of substantial length that supports students' claims, evaluates opposing and/or alternate viewpoints, and reaches a conclusion logically arising from the discussion;</li> </ul>	new		2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>communicate ideas clearly in an oral presentation, defending conclusions effectively and responding extempore to questions and critiques; and</li> </ul>	new		2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrate an understanding of the value of lifelong learning by articulating how educational experiences relate to careers and daily life.</li> </ul>	new		2018

**Describe how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan:**

The Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies reflects the **Mission of Marymount University** as an institution committed to the tradition of liberal arts with a strong foundation on the study of arts and sciences. In its stated emphasis in offering “career preparation and opportunities for personal and professional development,” the program acknowledges that the foundation of a liberal arts degree prepares students for different careers where analytical skills and excellence in oral communication and writing skills are valued.

The program stresses academic integrity, discipline, self-actualization, and perceiving the world not as it is, but as it can be (a Humanistic idea). The program encourages students to keep an open mind when examining issues. In the capstone course, students must consider opposing or alternate viewpoints when examining controversial issues in their fields and use logic and reason to establish their position. Students also seek internships that reflect Marymount’s Mission. Students have worked with autistic children, Washington youth on parole, and African children in an inoculation program sponsored by UNICEF and have examined the relationship of battered women and the position of the Catholic Church on divorce. Although most Liberal Studies students work part-or-full-time, their resumes almost always list volunteer activities, often spanning years. Students have volunteered in campus ministry missions both at home and abroad, in Special Olympics, teaching bible classes, and mentoring disadvantaged youth. The Liberal Studies objectives and goals and the students social commitment fit well within the scope of the University’s Mission.

The Liberal Studies program also supports Marymount’s **Strategic Plan**. The senior capstone seminar in particular offers students opportunities for extensive research, enhancing the intellectual experience by stressing sound research methodology and by encouraging a multidisciplinary approach to problem solving. Students are to choose current, controversial issues in their fields to explore and, where applicable, to consider the moral and ethical aspects of the subject. Students have chosen such topics as the reintegration of Holocaust survivors into society following World War II; the ethical dimensions of the Patriot Act; exploitation of the incarcerated by Big Business; and human trafficking. Library workshops supervised by Liberal Studies’ designated librarian and the instructors reinforce the development of inquiry skills.



In their writings, students are encouraged to seek academic excellence, a value made evident through the multiple revisions of students' papers that lie at the heart of Liberal Studies' portfolio classes. Students are encouraged to utilize Washington area resources--institutions such as the Smithsonian, the Holocaust museum, the Library of Congress--for research and the innumerable government and private sector opportunities for internships. The program is student-centered; the individual and his/her creative efforts are prized and his/her potential recognized. Frequent tutorials stress one-on-one interaction between teachers and students. Diversity--whether of cultures or viewpoints--is valued. Finally the program includes career preparation. One-on-one evaluation of resumes as well as the production of a letter of application are built into the syllabi; speakers from the Career Center give in-class informational sessions to students on topics such as securing internships, finding jobs, and becoming familiar with the resources available to Marymount students as alumni. With guidance from Career Services, students seek internships that prepare majors for further study and careers in education, nonprofit and humanitarian institutions, government, and business.

**Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment:**

The assessment process includes the following components: 1) careful monitoring of the production process of the senior essay, ensuring that students understand the writing process, beginning with selection of the topic to the submission of the final copy following appropriate formatting and documentation rules; 2) observation of students and hands-on mentoring by research library and chair in library workshops; 3) regular and detailed feedback on the developing senior thesis by the senior seminar instructor Is and by a final written of the senior thesis by an outside evaluator; and 4) evaluation of the career portfolio by the senior seminar instructor.

The description of the assessment process has been rewritten to reflect two important clarifications. The third component now specifies that the senior seminar instructor provides feedback on the developing thesis and an outside reader evaluates the final version. The fourth element has been revised to make clear that the senior seminar instructor evaluates the career portfolio that is designed to be a persuasive document to assist the student establishing a career.

**Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:**

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
Students engage in problem solving in their fields of interest, using a multidisciplinary approach; students research a topic that combines their two concentrations and necessitates scholarly research in both.	Planned changes are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the initial number of library workshops from 1 to 2; students as a group will return to the library once more towards the end of the semester to shore up areas of their papers needing further development and to check on citations.</li> <li>• Request that the librarian include instruction in and help students register for Ref Works at the initial workshop; the chair's belief students were familiar with the program was ungrounded.</li> </ul>	Library workshops were increased to 2. The program's assigned librarian produced a Libguide for the course and was available for tutorial sessions.  RefWorks was included in Library presentation but its use was recommended rather than mandated. As the results of the evaluation of final versions of the SP 2016 essay, the use of reference software should be mandated.

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stress the importance of books as sources; students increasingly are relying on academic databases because of the ease of accessing electronic sources.</li> <li>Prepare a “Research Methodology” rubric outlining each step in the construction of a senior thesis, from finding a research topic to delivery of the final manuscript. As each step in the process is completed, the teacher will check it as accomplished. At the end of the class, students will hand in all their materials (research proposal, bibliography cards, note cards, no. of conferences sheet, etc.) in a packet to be assessed as part of the Portfolio grade.</li> </ul>	<p>Given the differences in the ways disciplines publish research, this requirement is difficult to standardize. No approach other than verbal encouragement has yet been determined.</p> <p>I am unsure whether this was done. The materials described here were not passed on to the new chairperson.</p>
<p>Students write an extended argumentative research paper whose audience is the college-educated individual and that calls for critical thinking and a command of writing and documentation skills.</p>	<p>To forestall student procrastination, the chair will set periodic deadlines for submission of student work to assess progress. No paper will be graded unless a completed draft is critiqued at least once. An earlier deadline for submission of the final paper will be set to insure sufficient time for revision. Each conference will be listed and form part of the final grade. Interestingly, the response to “Manage time effectively” on the “2014-15 Graduating Student Survey—Comments—Redacted” was 84.2%.</p> <p>The portfolios are now submitted electronically. The chair feels that the now-debunked method of producing a physical portfolio employed in the past in both LS 300 and LS 420 gave students a greater sense of pride in their accomplishment and resulted in higher standards of presenting the final product. With a physical document, there is no escaping faulty mechanics (the margins are not even at the bottom of the page; my References are not properly or consistently listed; my paper is not double-spaced correctly throughout, etc.). The document is an artifact, to be handled and shared. (“Here it is; my tome!”) While the chair recognizes this is “retro” thinking, she is considering requiring students to submit a bound as well as an electronic version of their final papers.</p>	<p>A revised syllabus set due dates for specific tasks,, an earlier deadline for the final revision, and minimum number of conferences.</p> <p>The requirement of a physical copy of the portfolio was not implemented for students in Spring 2016. The new chairperson will consider the recommendation and make inquiry about the practice in other Arts and Sciences departments. Receiving quality e-portfolios may require the establishment of clear criteria and the designation of the best tools.</p>

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
<p>Students prepare for entry into the workforce by producing job-related documents and availing themselves of opportunities within the program for personal and professional development.</p>	<p>A Career Services representative will be asked to visit the LS 300 classroom (junior year portfolio course) to discuss obtaining an internship. The chair (who acts as the AIM) will also provide an information session to LS 300 students on the specific requirements for an internship in Liberal Studies. While each student speaks with the AIM individually about their specific internship (prior to approval) in which the AIM explains the purposes of an internship and the specific Liberal Studies requirements and provides a syllabus for the course, reaching out to juniors in the LS 300 classroom as a group early in the semester will explain the entire process and hopefully ease concerns, help prevent misinformation, and activate students to begin their internship search early. Students must also be made aware of new guidelines that might be forthcoming once the dean of career services completes his review of internship practices across the disciplines.</p> <p>Chairs are able to provide new items to be included in the next Graduating Student Survey. The chair will suggest the following be added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students were equipped to prepare a professional resume.</li> <li>• The Office of Career Services provided help with preparing my resume.</li> <li>• Informational classroom sessions by the Office of Career Services were helpful.</li> <li>• Informational e-mails about requirements, deadlines for graduation, etc. from the chair of Liberal Studies were helpful.</li> </ul>	<p>A Career and Internship Center now makes a presentation in both LS 300 and in LS420. The LS420 presentation now addresses specifically the issue of listing, describing and making use of the student's two concentrations on the resume.</p> <p>These items were not submitted by the previous chair in time to be used in the 2016 Graduating Student Survey. The current chair will submit for inclusion in the 2017 GSS.</p>



**Provide a response to last year's University Assessment Committee review of the program's learning assessment report:**

**UAC (on Mission):** *While all components are included in the Executive Summary, there is too much detail on specifics of the Liberal Studies program. Please be brief. Just curious - is it wise to say that this major is often chosen by students who encounter difficulty in their major coursework? Also, is there any concern that the evaluation of the senior portfolio is completed by the program coordinator - who is also the instructor for the senior tutorials? (Perhaps the librarians could be enlisted since faculty as readers proved problematic.) And, the fourth component of the assessment process does not appear to be a measure as worded (#4 preparation for career entry.)*

**Response:** The details about the structure of the Liberal Studies program have been removed from the Executive Summary. In 2015-2016, the evaluation of the final version of the senior thesis was carried out by a faculty member who was neither the chairperson nor the senior seminar instructor. The fact that the Liberal Studies program has a staff of one (i.e. the chairperson who may also be the instructor of record for any or all of the Triad courses) often cause an overlap of responsibilities. In 2016-2017, the new chairperson will seek to expand the pool of faculty explicitly linked to the program. The fourth component of assessment has been rephrased so that it is described as a measure.

**UAC (on Outcomes):** *Outcome #1 is not stated in measurable terms. What is meant by a "multidisciplinary approach?" What is meant by "problem-solving." This is unclear. The second part works better. Try something like, "Upon successful completion of this program, students demonstrate the ability to conduct scholarly interdisciplinary research." Outcome #2 – seems to be the same as Outcome #1? Again, needs to be re-worded in terms of skills and abilities, and critical thinking should be separated from the communication skills. Outcome #3 isn't a learning outcome, and reads that the outcome of the program is basically to write a resume. Wouldn't it be more useful to have outcomes that speak to the ability to think across multiple disciplines (synthesis, evaluate, integrate, critical thinking, critical analysis...), conduct research, write and speak effectively, to argue and debate ideas using their ability to see bridges between or among disciplines, etc.? If students are expected to go on to graduate school, these kinds of outcomes will be more valuable to them.*

**Response:** Last year's three learning outcomes have been completely revised. There are now six learning outcomes whose description makes them more precise and more readily measured. The new descriptions separately address researching skills, writing skills, oral presentation skills, and metacognitive articulation.

**UAC (on Assessment Measures and Targets):** *What is reported here is the process used to support students in preparation of their final theses. For program assessment, it's important to start from the Learning Outcome and gear your assessment to measuring directly what you hope the students gain from the outcome (e.g., scholarly review of 2 literature from 2 disciplines). The rubric for grading the thesis papers is a very good start for measuring outcomes #1 and #2! Direct measure could be an item on that rubric. Then establish a performance standard, such as 75% of the students will score VG or above on "Critical thinking." Then for Data Collection, explain who reviewed the work of each student using the rubric. We suggest multiple judges, especially a judge who is NOT the instructor of the course. You might mention how you coded and summarized the data, and simply report what you counted up. E.g., E=4 students VG=3 students G= 10 students, and so on. Use tables whenever you can.*

*For Outcome #3, the measures as described in the report are confusing. Apply your Performance Standard – e.g., 80% of students will complete their resumes with approval from the Career Center. Is there a rubric for evaluating the quality of the resumes? Or 80% of students will complete the Info sessions form Career Center. Since this is a Learning Outcome, I suggest you measure what the students actually learned in the process of preparing their career related documents. In other words, is the Liberal Studies program doing a good job with assisting students meet the stated Learning Outcome? That would provide much more useful feedback on how to improve your program on that Learning Outcome. As you revise your outcomes, you will most likely need to revise these measures as well. You need to establish targets.*



**Response:** The new outcomes will be assessed in this year's report by using the thesis paper rubric and by setting performance standards. As suggested an additional reader was used to evaluate the senior thesis. The scores given by two readers was tabulated. I chose to assess two outcomes (#2 and #3) that were closely related And for which the current rubric provided effect measures. I chose not to assess the first outcome because I think the rubric language needs to be changed to be an effective measure. I identified a performance standard which states that 60% of the students receive scores of "Very Good" or "Excellent". I believe this standard is in line with standards in similar programs.

**UAC (on Use of Assessment to Improve Effectiveness):** *Please reflect on the assessment process only and make interpretations data-based. Keep in mind, the results gleaned from assessment should always point you to opportunities for program improvement (many times the results will be very disappointing or surprising!), or affirmation that there are strengths in the program (point them out!).*

**Response:**

**UAC (Other):** *Go back to the Learning Outcomes and reformulate so they lend themselves to being measured. Your rubric is pretty good and should link in comfortably with your Learning Outcomes. Work on those Performance Standards, and consider adding an additional judge to review the thesis papers for the purpose of assessment. It would take so much of the work off you, and add to the objectivity of the process.*

**Response:** As suggested, the Learning Outcomes have been revised in order to link to the Performance Standards. Also, an additional judge (a faculty member who had prior experience with Liberal Studies courses but who was not associated with the program from 2009-2016) was used to assess the final senior theses. The rubric for 2015-2016 was unchanged, but it was rewritten to improve grammatical parallelism in order to clarify items.

**UAC Recommendations:** *Re-do the executive summary in line with the comments in section 1. Please avoid personal reflections in the text, such as "students too often are guilty of procrastination...". Send to PIE by Dec. 11. Submit a revised plan to PIE by Dec. 11 (in line with statements below and above in each section). Revise learning outcomes in line with suggestions above. Work with PIE as a resource to help in this process. Need to revise assessment measures and develop targets in line with the new outcomes. Assess using your newly revised plan, once it's been reviewed by PIE.*

**Response:** The executive summary has been revised to emphasize the revised learning outcomes listed in the 2016-2017 undergraduate catalog. The outcomes were submitted to PIE by the deadline and approved for inclusion in the current catalog

## Outcomes Assessment 2015-2016

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**Learning Outcome 1:** apply and integrate methods from different disciplines in research and analysis that examine an issue from multiple perspectives, effectively incorporating and synthesizing information from two different disciplines

### Assessment Activity



<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Student learning is measured by evaluation of the senior thesis through the section of the rubric "Topic Analysis" (direct)	60% of the scores will be "very good" or "excellent"	Data was gathered from the scored rubrics for 13 senior theses by two evaluators.	1. Scores for each section were recorded in a spreadsheet, added together, and the percentage of scores at each rating point (excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, failing) were calculated. 2. There were four criteria reviewed under "Topic Analysis." 50% of scores under "Holds Current Interest" met the performance standard. 56% of scores under "integrates two concentrations" met the standard. 44% under "generates arguable claims" met the standard. 33% under "provides new information" met the standard. Overall 46% of scores met the standard for "Topic Analysis"
Student learning is measured by evaluation of the senior thesis through the section of the rubric "Claims Analysis" (direct)	60% of the scores will be "very good" or "excellent"	Data was gathered from the scored rubrics for 13 senior theses by two evaluators	1. Scores for each section were recorded in a spreadsheet, added together, and the percentage of scores at each rating point (excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, failing) were calculated. 2. There were three criteria reviewed under "Claims Analysis". 33% of scores under "Claim is substantial . . ." met the standard. 22% under "evaluates opposing viewpoints. . ." met the standard. 22% under "sensitivity to conflict views" met the standard. Overall 26% of scores met the standard for "Claims Analysis".
Student self-assessment of critical thinking skills in the Graduating Student Survey and the Alumni Survey (indirect)	60% of respondents will rate their ability to integrate, incorporate and synthesize as "good" or "excellent"	Data was gathered was the 20125 GSS and 2015 Alumni Survey (with results from 2005, 2010, and 2015)	No questions in the GSS directly addressed Learning Outcome 1. There were questions tangentially related which are indicated below with the percentage of students expressing responses of "good" or "excellent". <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Apply knowledge and skills to new situations (82.4%)</li> <li>2. Determine the most ethically appropriate responses to a situation (62.5%)</li> <li>3. Conduct research to support a position (82.4%)</li> </ol> The Alumni Survey had no questions directly or indirectly addressing this objective.



### Interpretation of Results

**Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students** *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

The direct measures apply to 13 students who graduated in Spring 2016; the indirect measure applies to 17 students who graduated in prior years. The 2016 class fell short of the performance standard by a noticeable degree. The prior graduates self-evaluate their abilities in related areas that exceed the standard. Students did a better job meeting the standard in “Topic Analysis”(46%) than in “Claims Analysis” (26%)” The first is disappointing, the second is very disappointing. The data suggests a possibility that the program is not currently achieving a rigor that the program has historically offered students.

**Program strengths and opportunities for improvement** relative to assessment of outcome:

LS 300 and LS 420 are supposed to be book-end courses that are introductions and capstones to the major respectively. They are designed to be taken far enough apart in time that the majority of coursework in the concentrations is taken between taking this courses. First, the assessment suggests that students may be entering LS420 with the knowledge and skills that LS300 should have provided. The syllabus of LS400 needs to be reviewed to see whether the courses is providing the appropriate development of critical thinking skills as they uniquely apply to working in two different concentrations. Second, the assessment suggests that looking at when students take these courses in their program should be studied to see if advisors are properly explaining the purpose of each course and insuring they are taken appropriate spaced apart. Third, the assessment suggests that the LS420 syllabus may need more explicit attention to critical thinking skills.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements** for this year based on assessment of outcome:

1. A review of the LS300 syllabus
2. Establishment of advising guidelines fort advisors.
3. In LS420 more attention to critical thinking tasks.
4. Increase both peer feedback and instructor feedback by one additional period of instruction.

**Learning Outcome 2:** find, use, and evaluate a variety of sources of information and demonstrate competence in a documentation style appropriate to their discipline

#### Assessment Activity

<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Student learning is measured by evaluation of the senior thesis through the section of	60% of the scores will be “very good” or “excellent”	Data was gathered from the scored rubrics for 13 senior theses by two evaluators.	1.Scores for each section were recorded in a spreadsheet, added together, and the percentage of scores at each rating point (excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, failing) were calculated.

<p>the rubric “Scholarship” (direct)</p>			<p>2. There were four criteria reviewed under “Scholarship”. (One criterion, “balance between primary and secondary sources” was not applicable to any of the theses reviewed). 44% of the scores under “Scholarly information in each concentration” met the standard. “50% of them under “Quantity of sources” met the standard. 50% under “Quality of sources” met the standard. 28% under “critical analysis of sources” met the standard. Overall 43% met the standard for this category.</p>
<p>Student learning is measured by evaluation of the senior thesis through the section of the rubric “Format” (direct)</p>	<p>60% of the scores will be “very good” or “excellent”</p>	<p>Data was gathered from the scored rubrics for 13 senior theses by two evaluators</p>	<p>1. Scores for each section were recorded in a spreadsheet, added together, and the percentage of scores at each rating point (excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, failing) were calculated. 2. There were five criteria reviewed under “Format and Documentation” 44% under “appropriate documentation style” met the standard. 28% under “internal documentation properly executed” met the standard. 33% under “Works Cited/References correct” met the standard. 28% met the standard under “Source material effectively integrated”. 44% under “plagiarism traps avoided” met the standard.” Overall 36% in this category met the standard.</p>
<p>Student self-assessment of critical thinking skills in the Graduating Student Survey and the Alumni Survey (indirect)</p>	<p>60% of respondent will rate their ability to integrate, incorporate and synthesize as “good” or “excellent”.</p>	<p>Data was gathered was the 20125 GSS and 2015 Alumni Survey (with results from 2005, 2010, and 2015)</p>	<p>In the GSS several items applied to scholarship and documentation. 82.4% judged their preparation was good or excellent in being prepared “to conduct research”. 82.4% judged their preparation good or excellent to “find appropriate sources of information. 88.2% judged their ability to “evaluate the quality of information” good or excellent. In the 2015 Alumni Survey 90.9% judged themselves prepared to “conduct research to support a position.” 72.7% judged themselves able to “evaluate the quality of information.” 72.7% also judged themselves able to “conduct research to support a position.”</p>

**Interpretation of Results**

**Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students (Use both direct and indirect measure results):**



The direct measures indicate that students had greater success in meeting the standard under “Scholarship” than under “Format.” This outcome is somewhat counterintuitive from this perspective: the elements comprising “format” seem more concrete, specific and objective than the elements of scholarship which seem more abstract and subjective. The counter intuition, however, may fail to note that documentation of scholarship has become more complex in an age of electronic resources. Resources now come in many forms, not just in books and articles. I think the assessment shows the complicated task that documentation has become, but fortunately the means to manage sources have improved. I conclude that the assessment shows that too many students have not kept up with advances in documentation software.

Regarding the category of “scholarship”, I note that the overall percentage of students meeting the standard was reduced by lower achievement in the critical evaluation of sources. There is a parallel here with student success in meeting the standard discussed above, integrating information from “multiple perspectives”. The students seem to show difficulty in critical thinking skills which require the delicate balancing of striving to prove a thesis while resisting the temptation to exclude contradictory evidence or dissenting opinion.

In any case, the result of the assessment is disappointing. The results require a serious look at the core assumptions of the program. Fortunately, the core of the program is small, two courses that can be readily looked at individually and in tandem.

**Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**

As discussed above, a designed strength of the Liberal Studies program is the sequencing of LS300 and LS420. The assessment suggests that the sequencing or the coordination of these courses may be less effective than assumed. The fundamental conception of Liberal Studies, that a student can achieve a level of expertise in two concentrations and achieve a synthesis or integration of the two, is actually a very ambitious one. It may also be a very difficult one to achieve in just two courses

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**

1. Require the use of software such as RefWorks that manages citations and bibliography in both LS300 and LS420.
2. Increase the presence of library instruction and the librarian in support student use of such software.
3. Increase both peer feedback and instructor feedback on the evaluation of sources and citation strategy by one additional period of instruction each.
4. Review prior student use of scholarship in the concentrations and the use of documentation styles as a class activity in LS420.
5. Clarify the ways in which LS300 builds on informational literacy skills from EN102 and then how LS420 builds on LS300.