

OIR Assessment Tool
Essential Studies: Student Evaluations
AY 2009-2010
November, 2010

Purpose of Survey: *The data summarized in this report are drawn from the University Student Assessment of Teaching (USAT) survey. The USAT survey is more generally used to gather student feedback regarding instruction at the course level. Part 3 of the form (items 26 and 27) however asks students to rate their learning “within the Essential Studies curriculum”. Students are asked to rate the degree to which the course improved their learning across seven goals within four broad areas (Communication, Social Science, Arts & Humanities, and Math/Science/Technology).*

1. The data collected addresses information relating to what university group or situation? (I.e., from whom is the university collecting this information? Whose perceptions are we reading?)

It appears that the data reported in this summary are collected from undergraduate students taking approved Essential Studies courses or capstone courses in the fall of 2009 and the spring of 2010. However, there is no explanatory information that clearly describes the data collection process.

2. How often is this tool used and analyzed? What time of year?
Data are collected during the last two weeks of classes each fall and spring semester. The process for administering the USAT is provided on the OIR website (<http://www.und.edu/dept/datacol/usat/>).

3. To whom does the assessment group believe that an analysis of this report would be beneficial? In other words, what individuals, departments, or programs need this information in order to have reliable information to ‘close the loop’ on their assessment process?

Essential Studies Committee

Department chairs (for capstone courses & approved Essential Studies courses)

Program coordinators and individual faculty (for capstone courses approved essential studies courses)

Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education

4. Are there findings which may be of potential interest to other parties on campus? Who should be encouraged to access these findings?

See 3 above

5. Who is responsible to provide the assessment group the information for this report?

Office of Institutional Research

6. What UND student learning goals are assessed?

- a. Use Y, N, ? to indicate whether the instrument collects data relevant to each of the following Institutional and/or General Education goals:

Y 1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)
 Y 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
 Y 3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)
 Y 4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”)
 Y 5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)
 Y 6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)
 N 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
 N 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

- b. Additional goals

None

7. What are the findings/results of this tool?

- a. From Question 5a above: For the goals with a Y or ?, describe the relevant findings/results from this survey:

If the course was an Essential Studies course but not a capstone course, students were asked to respond to item 26 and rate the degree to which the course improved learning on a single targeted goal. If the course was an Essential Studies capstone, students were asked to respond to item 27 and rate the degree to which the course improved learning on the two goals addressed in the course. Students responded on a four point scale (1 = no improvement in learning to 4 = greatly improved learning). Results were reported across five broad areas (fields): Social Science AND Fine Arts/Humanities, Math, Science, & Technology, Fine Arts and Humanities, Communication, and Social Science by the seven Essential Studies goals and sub-elements. It was noted that the NA or no response percentages were extremely high because these percentages were based on all university courses not just Essential Studies courses. As of fall 2009, only a few capstone courses had been approved in the following program areas: Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Management, Occupational Therapy, and Social Work. When looking at the sample sizes across all broad areas (e.g. fine arts and humanities), it may be that students who were not currently taking capstones responded as though they were. This raises questions as to the efficacy of the results for capstone courses.

Mean scores for fall and spring semesters are reported below by Essential Studies goal first by general course and next by capstone course across the broad areas (fields):

General Courses

Essential Studies Goal	Social Science & Fine Arts/ Humanities	Fine Arts & Humanities	Social Sciences	Math, Science & Technology	Communication
Critical Thinking	3.1 (159)	3.3 (603)	3.2 (1643)	3.2 (2842)	3.2 (362)
Quantitative Reasoning	2.7 (35)	2.8 (115)	3.1 (609)	3.2 (2595)	2.8 (124)
Creative Thinking	3.2 (50)	3.3 (624)	3.2 (670)	3.0 (529)	3.3 (358)
Written Communication	3.2 (78)	3.2 (255)	3.0 (239)	2.7 (268)	3.2 (1401)
Oral Communication	2.9 (29)	3.3 (318)	2.9 (290)	2.6 (243)	3.3 (755)
Social-Cultural Diversity	3.2 (182)	3.3 (616)	3.4 (830)	2.6 (261)	2.9 (131)
Information Literacy	3.2 (71)	3.2 (169)	3.1 (284)	3.0 (463)	3.1 (145)

Capstone Courses

Essential Studies Goal	Social Science & Fine arts/ Humanities	Fine Arts & Humanities	Social Sciences	Math, Science & Tech.	Communication
Critical Thinking	3.1 (44)	3.3 (176)	3.2 (593)	3.3 (866)	3.3 (211)
Quantitative Reasoning	3.0 (28)	3.2 (89)	3.2 (330)	3.2 (757)	3.3 (89)
Creative Thinking	3.0 (34)	3.3 (198)	3.1 (347)	3.1 (305)	3.3 (238)
Written Communication	3.1 (29)	3.2 (128)	3.1 (209)	2.9 (151)	3.3 (340)
Oral Communication	3.0 (16)	3.1 (133)	3.0 (165)	2.9 (115)	3.4 (170)
Social-Cultural Diversity	3.4 (41)	3.3 (170)	3.3 (504)	2.9 (116)	3.0 (57)
Information Literacy	3.0 (36)	3.2 (72)	3.1 (215)	3.1 (217)	3.3 (103)

Summary statements related to the results listed above:

- For the most part, students reported that they perceived that the courses (capstone and general) improved their skills and knowledge (indicative of means at or greater than 3.0).
- Means for the goals of critical thinking, creative thinking, and information literacy were above 3.0 for general courses and capstones across all broad areas.
- Means for quantitative reasoning were above 3.0 in the broad areas of Social Science and Math, Science & Technology and below 3.0 in the broad areas of Social Science & Fine arts/ Humanities, Fine Arts & Humanities, and Communication in the general courses. However, all means were at or above 3.0 for all broad areas in the capstone courses.
- Means for written communication were above 3.0 in all broad areas with the exception of Math, Science & Technology in both general and capstone courses.
- Means for oral communication were above 3.0 in the broad areas of Fine Arts & Humanities and Communication but below 3.0 in the broad areas of Social Science & Fine Arts/ Humanities, Social Sciences, and Math, Science &

Technology for general courses. All means with the exception of Math, Science & Technology were above 3.0 in the capstone courses.

- *Means for social-cultural diversity were above 3.0 in all broad areas with the exception of Math, Science & Technology and Communication in general courses. Means were above 3.0 in all broad areas with the exception of Math, Science & Technology in the capstone.*
- *Means for written communication, oral communication, and social-cultural diversity were consistently below 3.0 in the broad area of Math, Science, & Technology in both the general courses and the capstone.*
- *Means that were under 3.0 in the general courses were higher for the capstone courses within the same broad categories (2.7 vs. 3.0 for quantitative reasoning in the broad area of Social Science & Fine Arts/ Humanities). It may be that the general courses were taken earlier on the program of study and the capstone course was taken near the end providing some evidence of the value added as students completed more coursework.*

b. Other findings/results

None

8. What evidence is provided or should be provided to support the results of the survey?

Direct assessment data drawn from Assessment Rubrics for ES Courses

(<http://www.und.edu/dept/registrar/EssentialStudies/ESrubrics09packet.pdf>)

Direct assessment measures used within the classroom and aligned with Essential Studies' goals.

9. What evidence does the assessment group believe should be collected/compiled for the next accreditation visit?

Summative USAT data for each of the Essential Studies goals over the last few years to determine trends across the seven goals and within the four broad areas (Communication, Social Science, Arts & Humanities, and Math/Science/Technology).

10. Is this tool a direct measure, an indirect measure, or a non-measure of student learning?

Indirect measure-student perceptions of learning related to targeted essential studies goals are collected.

11. Does this tool empower individuals or the university to better understand and assess student learning at the university? If so, how?

This tool provides summative indirect data but no specifics. Trend data may show patterns related to the broad essential studies goals that may help interested members of the university community better understand student learning associated with those goals.

12. Is there a better way to obtain or report the data to be analyzed?

No

13. Does the tool reflect a culture of assessment at UND?

Yes

14. Does the tool need increased university or administrative support or faculty involvement in order to make it more useable or effective?

No

15. Does the assessment group need any administrative insight or guidance in order to analyze the tool effectively?

The data are presented in summary tables by broad Essential Studies areas: Social Science AND Fine Arts/Humanities, Math, Science, & Technology, Fine Arts and Humanities, Communication, and Social Science. It would be helpful to add explanatory information, so that reviewers understood the following:

- Why are five areas reported although only four of these areas are listed on the Essential Studies website (broad field)?*
- How are approved courses and capstones identified and disaggregated from all university courses?*
- Why are the sample sizes reported in the broad areas so discrepant-for example the group for the area Fine Arts and Humanities is much larger than the group for Social Science AND Fine Arts/Humanities? How do you determine which courses count in which area are they counted only once or might a course be counted in more than one broad area?*
- Is it possible to report the results from only those courses that are approved Essential Studies courses and capstones? The results of all courses across the university does not seem germane to this report.*

16. What value does the committee place on this tool for helping to achieve the university's assessment plan?

The tool is a broad summative means of assessing essential studies goals and can be used to complement assessment at the classroom level to assess student learning. The tool provides evidence that the University engages in ongoing assessment of student learning.

18. Review Summary (one or two sentences)

The data derived from the USAT forms indicate that in general students are satisfied that essential studies and capstone courses have helped them improve their skills in thinking and reasoning, communication, information literacy, and diversity.

19. Recommendations of the Reviewers

Please see item 15 above. In addition, the results of the survey should be made available to those groups detailed in item 3. It should be noted that this is a

student self-assessment and should be used along with other measures when analyzing the extent to which student learning goals are met.

20. What might faculty want to know about this survey? (Please provide one to two paragraphs describing some findings from this survey. These paragraphs will be forwarded to academic departments as a means of keeping them informed about the existence of information that might be useful to them.)

The USAT survey incorporates an assessment of courses that are part of the Essential Studies curriculum, including capstones. The USAT Essential Studies/General Education Summary for 2009-2010 presented disaggregated data related to Essential Studies coursework. If a course was an Essential Studies course but not a capstone course, students were asked to respond to item 26 on the form and rate the degree to which the course improved learning on a single targeted goal. If the course was a capstone, students were asked to respond to item 27 and rate the degree to which the course improved learning on the two goals targeted for the course. Students responded on a four point scale (1= no improvement in learning to 4 = greatly improved learning). Results were reported across five broad areas (fields): 1.) Social Science AND Fine Arts/Humanities, 2.) Math, Science, & Technology, 3.) Fine Arts and Humanities, 4.) Communication, and 5.) Social Science by the four Essential Studies goals and their elements.

For the most part, students reported that they perceived that the courses (capstone and general) improved their skills and knowledge (indicative of reported means at or greater than 3.0). Means for the goals of critical thinking, creative thinking, and information literacy were above 3.0 for general courses and capstones across all broad areas. Means for quantitative reasoning were above 3.0 in the broad areas of Social Science and Math, Science & Technology and below 3.0 in the broad areas of Social Science & Fine arts/Humanities, Fine Arts & Humanities, and Communication in the general courses. However, all means were at or above 3.0 for all broad areas in the capstone courses. Means for written communication were above 3.0 in all broad areas with the exception of Math, Science & Technology in both general and capstone courses. Means for oral communication were above 3.0 in the broad areas of Fine Arts & Humanities and Communication but below 3.0 in the broad areas of Social Science & Fine Arts/Humanities, Social Sciences, and Math, Science & Technology for general courses. All means with the exception of Math, Science & Technology were above 3.0 in the capstone courses. Means for social-cultural diversity were above 3.0 in all broad areas with the exception of Math, Science & Technology and Communication in general courses. Means that were under 3.0 in the general courses were higher for the capstone courses within the same broad categories. It may be that the general courses were taken earlier on the program of study and the capstone course was taken near the end providing some evidence of the value added as students completed more coursework.

Submitted by: *Members of University Assessment Committee*
Date of Submission:

Form revised: 11/2/09