Executive Summary:

The Rutgers – New Brunswick Core Curriculum serves as the general education program for students matriculating in the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS), and the Rutgers Business School – New Brunswick.

The Core Requirements Committee (CRC) requests academic departments report on assessment activities and results for their Core-certified courses on a three-year rotating cycle. Although fully online courses are usually required to report every time they are offered, given the unique circumstances of the pandemic-necessitated shift to remote/online instruction, this requirement was lifted during this reporting cycle. Summer 2020 reporting was also made optional due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CRC requested reports from 141 of the 447 Core courses offered Fall 2020, 15 of the 43 Core courses offered Winter 2021, and 137 of the 467 Core courses offered Spring 2021. We received results for 218 courses required to report (74% response rate). Core assessment results were also filed voluntarily for an additional 262 courses, which includes 48 courses for Summer 2020, 93 courses for Fall 2020, 15 courses for Winter 2021, and 106 courses for Spring 2021. The combined enrollment in all courses reporting Core goals assessment was over 60,000 students. Just under 70 percent of the submitted reports included plans to make changes to improve student learning or to improve the measurement of student learning.

This year, the discursive “plans for modification” submitted with many Core assessment reports provided particularly valuable insight into the impact of the pandemic and the shift to remote instruction. Themes conveyed in these plans include:

- **Responding to COVID-related stresses:** instructors commonly reported that they adjusted their instruction or assessment strategies in response to the stress that the COVID-19 pandemic caused their students.
- **Carrying forward active-learning and flipped-classroom strategies:** instructors adopted a range of instructional strategies during the pandemic that they intend to implement in the future, including “flipped classroom” approaches and adding active learning activities.
- **Changes to assessments:** many instructors reported making changes to the way they assessed students this year. These changes responded to limitations and stresses of the pandemic remote teaching environment—while also, in many cases, implementing research-based best practices.

In AY 2020–21 the CRC also finalized a revised summative assessment narrative requirement. The CRC wants to use the narrative requirement to encourage the discussion and use of assessment results; cultivate a culture of reflection on teaching in Core courses; encourage departments to think strategically about their participation in the Core; and learn about and disseminate best practices in Core instruction. To that end, the CRC developed a new process in which SAS Office of Undergraduate Education staff distribute summative spreadsheets to each reporting department, providing them with an overview of their Core assessment results, and departments discuss those results and complete a new narrative template (Appendix C below). To allow for departments to reflect on a full year of reported results, these narratives are due in the Fall semester after their reporting year. Hence these narratives will be summarized in the following year’s RU–NB Core Curriculum Assessment Report.
Assessment of the New Brunswick Core Curriculum 2020–21

Following the 2006 adoption of the “Transformation of Undergraduate Education Task Force Report” recommending the reorganization of undergraduate education and the establishment of the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), a faculty committee began a year and a half of deliberation resulting in an innovative new goal-based Core Curriculum. The combined SAS and professional school-based faculty adopted the Core in the Spring of 2008 to go into effect with students entering in Fall 2011. Undergraduate students matriculating in the School of Arts and Sciences and the New Brunswick Business School, including those planning to complete majors offered by the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, the School of Communication and Information, the School of Management and Labor Relations, the School of Social Work, the Mason Gross School of the Arts BA programs, and the five-year Graduate School of Education program, participate in the Core Curriculum. These Schools are represented (in rotation) on the Core Requirements Committee (CRC), as is the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences education at a leading 21st Century public research university. A description of the Core Curriculum can be found in Appendix A. Unlike many of our peers whose general education requirements are difficult to find on their public web pages, links to the Core goals are prominent on the main SAS Office of Undergraduate Education web page, and the Core goals, and the courses that satisfy each of these requirements, are on the Advising and Academic Services web page. The Core goals are also part of the text students see in the Schedule of Classes and Degree Navigator as they chart their progress toward completing their degrees. As illustrated in Appendix B, these Core goals are aligned with the University learning goals and they are the general education learning goals for the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Clearly defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Publicly posted – provide url</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://sasoew.rutgers.edu/core/core-learning-goals">http://sasoew.rutgers.edu/core/core-learning-goals</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Aligned in hierarchy of learning goals</td>
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<td>○ University level</td>
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<td>○ Decanal Unit level</td>
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<td>○ Program/department level</td>
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<td></td>
<td>○ Course level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Course Syllabi/synopsis/expanded description includes appropriate learning goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Identifies where or how the goals are met</td>
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Under the revised Core Curriculum approved by the faculty May 2017 and in effect for all students entering AY 2018–19 and later, students are required to meet 14 requirements based in 20 learning goals clustered in 3 areas. The Core is structured to ensure that all students will meet the learning outcome goals that the faculty have identified as forming the core of a modern liberal arts and sciences education at a leading 21st Century public research university. A description of the Core Curriculum can be found in Appendix A. Unlike many of our peers whose general education requirements are difficult to find on their public web pages, links to the Core goals are prominent on the main SAS Office of Undergraduate Education web page, and the Core goals, and the courses that satisfy each of these requirements, are on the Advising and Academic Services web page. The Core goals are also part of the text students see in the Schedule of Classes and Degree Navigator as they chart their progress toward completing their degrees. As illustrated in Appendix B, these Core goals are aligned with the University learning goals and they are the general education learning goals for the

1 School of Environmental and Biological Sciences Core Curriculum, adopted 2013-14: https://sebs.rutgers.edu/core/
2 Students entering as Engineering, Pharmacy, or Mason Gross BFA students have not been required to complete the Core Curriculum, but the mandatory curriculums at each of these Schools include some courses certified for the Core Curriculum. Hence, every New Brunswick undergraduate takes courses that have been certified for the Core: 01:355:101 Expository Writing; specified mathematics courses; and specified natural science courses. Transfer students are required to take Contemporary Challenges courses [CC] and a Writing and Communication with revision course [WCR] at Rutgers NB. UMDNJ legacy schools have not been integrated into the New Brunswick undergraduate program at this time.
3 See original document online at http://sas.rutgers.edu/component/docman/doc_download/549-core-sas-a-university-learning-goals-aligned.
undergraduate programs in each of the Schools listed above. And, as discussed below, each course certified for the Core must include the Core goals on the syllabus. Codes for the Core goal categories are also in the Web Registration system and Course Schedule Planner that students use for registration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Assessment Plan, Structure, and Process: Describes the assessment structure and the process by which the assessment plan was developed and shared within the unit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Efficient</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ Effective</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Sustainable</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Reviewed annually</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Assessment Tools/Measures</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Includes some direct measures</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Tools/measures appropriate to goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Designed to produce reliable results that can be used for program improvement</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Benchmarks/Standards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Describes the process used to define standards, targets, and relevant peer and historical comparisons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ Articulates appropriately rigorous standards for judging student achievement of learning goals and identifies unacceptable levels of performance for all learning goals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Core Requirements Committee (CRC) oversees the Core. The CRC is made up of faculty and staff representatives from the various Schools that use the Core and the SAS Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education. The CRC generally meets every three to four weeks to review petitions to add courses to the list of those certified for the Core, and otherwise make Core Curriculum policy.

Assessment is an integral part of this Core Curriculum. The Core Requirements Committee requires all courses certified for the Core to include a clear statement of the Core goal(s) on the syllabus and a plan for assessing student achievement of the specified Core learning goal(s). These assessment plans are reviewed by the CRC before a course is recommended to the full faculty for certification as meeting any Core Curriculum goal(s).

The primary method of assessment employed in Core courses involves scoring an embedded assignment or exam question(s) using Core goal rubrics the CRC has developed as the preferred “best practice” assessment option. The full process and rubrics are available on the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) website at http://sasoue.rutgers.edu/core/core-assessment. All the Core rubrics are available on the OUE webpage. Faculty are also free to adopt other methods of assessing student achievement of Core learning goals. For example, some faculty use pre and post tests and report the number of students who have achieved the goals at an outstanding, good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory level.

This model of assessment of student learning through authentic, embedded, direct assessments implemented in courses across the Core Curriculum reflects a strong consensus nationally about best practices in effective general education programs.

As assessment is built into the structure of Core courses -- generally rubric-based scoring of embedded assignments, as noted -- the CRC expects these assessments will be conducted every time

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4 See page 14 for Core Requirements Committee (CRC) members, AY 2020–21.
that the Core course is offered. The CRC asks departments for complete assessment reports on all Core certified courses at three-year intervals, such that each year the CRC reviews assessment reports from a third of the departments. These assessment reports are intended to:

- compile systematic evidence that students are achieving the Core Curriculum goals;
- identify gaps between the aspirations of the courses and actual student achievement; and
- provide a trigger for modification or department review of the certified courses and their appropriateness for the Core.

After surveying the literature on assessment and best practices at peer institutions, we have benchmarked Core goal outcomes with an expectation that at least two-thirds of students will meet the assessed goal at the satisfactory or better level. In fact, our faculty members have responded to scores well above this benchmark with reforms designed to improve student learning in Core courses. The CRC retains an annually updated catalog of these reforms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Assessment Implementation and Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducted and reports on at least one direct assessment measure of at least one of the primary student learning goals; results included in report</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Response to Assessment Results: “Closing the Loop” activities</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Describes the process used to review assessment information and use for improvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Modification/refinement of pedagogy, curriculum, assessment tool, or learning goal based on assessment results. Provides evidence and/or examples of improvements made based on the results of learning outcomes assessment</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Academic year 2020–21 was the tenth year of the Core Curriculum, and saw the graduation of the seventh class governed by the Core requirements. It was also the first year of the fourth 3-year cycle of learning goals assessment results, in which the reporting departments have been asked to include a substantive analysis of the cumulative assessment results; information about modifications that may have been made to any course based on prior assessments; and observations on changes in student learning outcomes over the reporting cycle.

In AY 2020–21, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CRC modified its reporting requirements in two ways. Summer 2020 assessment reporting was made optional. And the CRC suspended its requirement that courses certified for fully online delivery assess student mastery of Core goals each time they are offered, regardless of the three-year reporting cycle.

In AY 2020–21 the CRC also completed preparations for a revised summative assessment narrative requirement. These narratives, always a required aspect of Core reporting, had often involved departments repeating the data they had already reported in course-level reports. The CRC wanted to use the narrative requirement to encourage the discussion and use of assessment results; cultivate a culture of reflection on teaching in Core courses; encourage departments to think strategically about their participation in the Core; and learn about and disseminate best practices in Core instruction. To that end, the CRC developed a new process in which SAS Office of Undergraduate Education staff distribute summative spreadsheets to each reporting department, providing them with an overview of their Core assessment results, and departments discuss those results and complete a new narrative template (Appendix C below). The CRC also provided a set of samples to illustrate the type of engagement it hopes to encourage (Appendix D below). To allow for departments to reflect on a full year
of reported results, these narratives are due in the Fall semester after their reporting year. Hence these narratives will be summarized in the following year’s RU–NB Core Curriculum Assessment Report.

For AY 2020–21, the CRC requested 141 of the 447 Core courses offered Fall 2020, 15 of the 43 Core courses offered Winter 2021, and 137 of the 467 Core courses offered Spring 2021. (Summer 2020 reporting was made optional due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.) We received results for 218 courses required to report (74% response rate). Reflecting the CRC’s encouragement of best practices in implementing Core goal assessments, results were voluntarily filed for another 262 courses. The combined enrollment of all courses reporting Core goals assessments was over 60,000 students. Table 1 lists the departments from which assessment reports were received this year. Many courses are certified for more than one Core goal, giving us a database of 77,783 individual student assessment scores ranging across the 19 Core goals in AY 2020–21.

Due to pandemic-related changes to the CRC’s reporting requirements, summative statistics like counts of reporting departments and compliance rates for AY2020–21 are not comparable to prior years. Nonetheless, the volume of Core reports submitted this year reflects a mature and widespread culture of assessment within the Core curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Departments and Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAS</td>
<td>American Studies, Anthropology</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chemistry &amp; Chemical Biology, Classics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Comparative Literature, Criminal Justice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Earth &amp; Planetary Sciences, Economics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>English Writing Program (all), European Studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>History</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jewish Studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Statistics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SAS Signature Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EJBSPPP</td>
<td>All courses</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The results for AY 2020–21 are presented in Figure 1. This year, satisfactory level (or better) achievement ranged from around 86 percent in the Natural Science goals to 96 percent in the AHq and CCD-1 goals.
Figure 1: 2020–21, detail

Assessment of Core Curriculum, 2020-2021

60,186 students enrolled in 480 courses completing 77,783 assessments
(some courses assessed students on multiple goals)

- ARTS AND HUMANITIES
  - AHo, philosophical and theoretical issues
  - AHp, arts and literatures
  - AHq, nature of languages
  - AHr, critical creative expression

- DIVERSITIES & SOCIAL INEQUALITIES
  - CCD-1, human differences and stratifications
  - CCD-2, social justice & unbalanced power

- OUR COMMON FUTURE
  - CC0-1, multidisciplinary current global issue
  - CC0-2, science and technology related to social...

- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH
  - ITR, principles of information systems

- NATURAL SCIENCES
  - NS-1, basic principles & concepts in science
  - NS-2, assess evidence, methods, theory

- QUANTITATIVE AND FORMAL REASONING
  - QQ, use quantitative information
  - QR, mathematical or formal reasoning

- SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS
  - SCL-1, theories of social organization
  - SCL-2, application of social analysis
  - HST-1, analyze historical developments
  - HST-2, employ historic reasoning

- WRITING AND COMMUNICATION
  - WCD, effective in an area of inquiry or discipline
  - WCR, writing with revision
Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is most informative to focus this year’s discussion of “closing the loop” activities on themes emerging from the “plans for modification” submitted with Core assessment reports. These plans provide fine-grained details about the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote instruction impacted students; how faculty have adjusted their instructional strategies to respond; and what faculty have learned from these experiences that will inform their teaching in the future.

**Responding to COVID-related stresses:** instructors commonly reported that they made adjustments to their instruction or assessment strategies in response to the stress that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused their students. “The fall semester was mainly about managing COVID-related student anxiety,” one wrote. Another conducted a mid-semester survey of students and was surprised to find that students thought the course’s reading load was too high:

> I have thought about this a lot and it seems to me that due to the current pandemic and the exclusively online learning environment, students (1) are more distracted than they normally would be, (2) their lives are less regulated and sleeping schedules are all over the place, which also impacts their ability to concentrate, and (3) students are unable to work at their usual pace given a global situation that’s extremely stressful...

Another instructor noted a divergence in student experiences: “In general, I found that students who weren't in crisis during the pandemic actually devoted more time to their studies (fewer distractions?), and performed better than I might expect” (emphasis added).

Instructors responded to these challenges in a variety of ways. Some reported a strong desire to return to in-person instruction: “I want us all to be vaccinated so I can work with students again in person,” as one wrote. The instructor who conducted a mid-semester survey indicated that, “going forward, especially as we embark on an online Spring 2021 semester, I will take these factors into more concrete consideration as I structure my class such that the majority of my students feel that albeit it may be challenging, it is not utterly overwhelming.”

“I think that the global pandemic had an enormous impact on student performance,” another instructor wrote, indicating that in future online or remote courses, “I will do two virtual check-ins throughout the semester, in addition to holding mandatory office hours for each student to discuss the course once for the semester.” Another noted that, “I eliminated a couple of short readings from the syllabus in an effort to ease student workload, and may retain this revised syllabus in the future. Most students managed well under these difficult circumstances, and many indicated that they enjoyed the readings and essay assignments.”

One instructor found that added flexibility helped to keep students motivated throughout the semester: Whereas I've regularly found in the past that a significant number of students seemed to lose focus on the course after receiving the results of their first take-home exam, this semester I
decided to drop the lowest of students' three exam grades. While this was really a response to
the current challenges many students were facing, I did feel that this change helped students
feel motivated to continue focusing on the material and on assignments in the second half of
the semester.

Some instructors reported optimism despite these stresses, for instance:
Given the constraints that my students were operating under due to the pandemic, I was
extremely impressed with student performance on the Core goals this semester. Due to the
asynchronous nature of the course, I replaced live discussion with forum posts. I think that
writing each week about the course readings led the students to retain more of the course
content (and, frankly, to do more of the reading), and improved performance in the class
overall. As a result, I am contemplating having weekly, low-stakes writing assignments even
when classes resume in person.

Another instructor described the community their class achieved in the remote environment:
I must confess, this course ran extremely smoothly despite the online learning dynamic. In fact, I
might argue that the class synergy and cohesiveness was more central because of the shared
pandemic experience. Nearly all of the students shared that our course was a safe place in a
world that was grappling with great uncertainty....we connected the past to the present in so
many meaningful ways through the use of evidence, history, research inquiries, and analytical
review. On a minor note, perhaps I could have used the break out rooms in zoom to allow
students greater peer-to-peer sharing, yet we did a tremendous amount of sharing as a whole.
And such classroom contributions added so much to our collective learning arc.

Carrying forward active-learning and flipped-classroom strategies: faculty created or refined many
active-learning instructional techniques that plan to carry forward to their future teaching.

“Flipped classroom” strategies are a common area of interest for the future. “The course was
substantially modified for remote operation,” another instructor notes. “When next taught, I intend to
maintain the 'flipped classroom' mode of operation, with many of the lectures prerecorded, while using
in-person convening to restore more of the interactive group exercises that have traditionally
characterized this course.”

Other instructors noted student interest in recorded lectures: “The course was asynchronous remote
and student comments were mostly positive. Students particularly liked lectures broken down into
short 10-15 minute segments rather than one long video.”

One lab course reported that, despite challenges meeting practical learning goals in the remote setting,
“We also developed low stakes “Chapter quizzes” that students can take several times to assess their
understanding of the topics covered in the videos. We plan to continue to use these next year to “flip”
the class. We plan to use the lecture periods as discussions to cover aspects of the course more in depth
and to go over problems and model the analysis of the data.”

Other instructors reported success when adding other active learning activities to their class—for
instance, small-group work: “I found that having students work regularly in small groups (using breakout
rooms on Zoom) was an effective way of engaging students in course materials,” one instructor
reported; “I plan to adapt this to in-classroom teaching.” Another reflected:
I need to increase the use of Breakout Rooms and individual Zoom meetings earlier in the semester, because it was in those early days when several of my students almost drifted away from the class due to their frustration with remote learning. Directly engaging them in smaller groups allowed me to bring them back into the fold.”

Another instructor found polling beneficial: “the online format forced me to figure out how to set up and use polling to find out from students what was working and what wasn’t. This is something I certainly plan to continue doing in the future.”

**Changes to assessments:** many instructors reported making changes to the way they assessed students this year. “We asked students to take a relatively short timed version of each week’s quiz, allowing them to see incorrect answers but not enough time to look them up,” one instructor reported. After polling, this instructor found that “the students found the form of quizzing particularly helpful.”

An instructor teaching a lab course indicated that, “because all assessments were taken remotely this year, we assumed that students would try to look everything up on-line. We therefore developed a series of higher-order “Analysis quizzes” that probe their ability to problem solve and to extrapolate their understanding of the material. We will likely continue to use these again next year.”

Another instructor who found similar success with frequent, low-stakes assessment reported: Assessment relied on more frequent 'lower-stake' assignments--a running course anthology; collaborative annotations of primary and secondary documents--and the one significant 'traditional' project, set for the end of the semester, gave students the opportunity to work in different media (the 5 pp. essay, or narrated powerpoint, or podcast style presentation). Going forward, I'm interested to see how collaborative annotation assignments and multimedia historical presentations work as assignments in the in-person versions of this and my other courses. Overall, I was pleased with the students' work in the class: managing 100 students in a remote environment is hard, but the students for the most part remained engaged, showed up to online discussion sections, and (for the most part) continued to actively participate in those sections across the semester.

Another instructor reported extensive adjustments to exam formats in the remote setting: The weight of the cumulative exam was lowered from 30% of the grade when I taught 105 Winter 2020 to 25% of the grade for 106 Winter 2021...Students were also given a larger time frame in which to complete the timed online exam which offered more flexibility and eased some of the pressure of taking a timed exam.

This instructor found that, “The combination of all of the above resulted in overall higher exam grades”—and added that “Grades were overall very representative of the quality of work produced by many of the students throughout the semester.”

Other instructors introduced creative options for students: “In order to adapt to the remote instruction environment,” one wrote, “I experimented with a new type of final project: students were asked to create a handout and an educational activity for children.” This instructor plans to carry forward some of the lessons learned from this experiment: “After receiving positive feedback from the students, I will definitely continue to implement at least two strategies from this year’s experiment: 1) Scaffolding. I will divide the final project into smaller tasks, distributed during the semester. 2) I will assign a short reflection paper at the end of the project.” It is worth noting that both of these strategies are well-established best practices in instruction and assessment.
Another instructor writes that “In the spirit of experimentation, and, in response to a long two and half semesters of remote learning, students were invited to select the format of their response: 1) a traditional narrative essay or 2) a presentation that includes text/image/audio components (audio was optional).” This instructor plans to offer these options again in the future, noting that “In some ways, this format encouraged students to sharpen their thesis and conclusions, and to select strong examples. Including relevant visual elements had the positive effect of encouraging research on the topic.”

Another instructor explained that, “In Spring 2020 when we were forced to rapidly switch to online teaching, I modified the syllabus to include a series of required blog posts in lieu of in-class quizzes. I retained the blog requirement for this year’s fully synchronous remote course, and plan to make this a permanent requirement in the future. The blogs allow students to test out ideas and receive feedback before writing their major essays.”

Finally, an instructor in a literature course opted to make assignments highly focused on the course’s most important learning goals—even setting aside traditional discussion board assignments—with encouraging results:

I took the fully online format as an opportunity to restructure the course in major ways. I concentrated almost entirely on teaching the students how to write the short analytic papers that are the classic assignment for this sort of course. Interaction between students was restricted to peer review groups; there were no discussion boards. I held at least two group tutorials for each assignment, with extra sessions upon student request. I also kept the reading list even shorter than it would have been in the tradition format. This worked very well...By the third assignment nearly every student in the class was producing solid literary analysis, and this from a group of mainly science and business majors who had never done anything like this before.

Revisions of the Core Curriculum in Response to Internal and External Reviews

As described in previous years’ Core assessment reports, the Core Curriculum underwent a major revision based on the May 2015 findings of a yearlong review by the Committee for the Evaluation of the Core (CEC). The full revisions were approved at the May 2018 SAS Faculty and Affiliates meeting and went into effect for students entering in Fall 2019. (Students entering prior to Fall 2019 may choose to instead fulfill the requirements of the previous version.) The revised Core Curriculum is presented in Appendix A.

The four key changes to the Core Curriculum were the following:

1. Add a diversity goal to the Core by revising Contemporary Challenges to include two categories, Contemporary Challenges: Diversities and Social Inequalities, and Contemporary Challenges: Our Common Future, with students required to take one three- or four-credit course in each category.
2. Eliminate Information Technology and Research as a Core Curriculum requirement.
3. Limit certification of Core courses so that students can use them to meet no more than two Core requirements.
4. Require that courses certified for the Core be offered at least every other year, on a regular schedule.

The revisions to the Core Curriculum have now been fully implemented. To date, more than 100 courses have been certified by the Core Requirements Committee to meet one—or both—of the new Diversities and Social Inequalities (CCD) goals. A list of all courses certified for each of the current Core goals can be found here. Feedback about the new Core diversity goal has been extremely positive.

Future Directions in Assessment of the Core Curriculum

As described above, in 2020–21 the CRC finalized and implemented a new process for summative narratives to accompany reporting of Core assessment results. To allow for departments to reflect on and discuss a full year of reported results, these narratives are due at the conclusion of the Fall semester after their reporting year. (Hence narratives reflecting on 2020–21 results will be reported in the 2021–22 RU–NB Core Curriculum Assessment Report, and similarly in future years.) Members of the CRC will review these results after they are submitted and provide individualized feedback to each reporting department. The CRC may also make further revisions to the narrative guidelines and process in order to ensure that the process promotes the CRC’s goals and is productive and useful for participating departments.

We are grateful for the role assessment plays in keeping the faculty actively engaged with undergraduate education and we look forward to presenting further progress to the Assessment Council on Learning Outcomes each year. Even (or perhaps especially) in a year filled with unprecedented disruptions and challenges, the assessment process in 2020-21 provided important information and insights that will inform ongoing efforts by individual faculty members, departments, and the School as a whole to maintain a central focus on student learning as we continue to adapt to an ever-evolving teaching and learning environment. The Core Requirements Committee, in alignment with the University, is committed to promoting and maintaining a genuine culture of improvement through direct faculty involvement in and ownership of the assessment of student learning.

Submitted on behalf of the Core Requirements Committee by:

Sharon Bzostek
Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education and Professor of Sociology
School of Arts and Sciences

David Goldman
Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
School of Arts and Sciences

Note that some courses may be cross-listed under more than one course number. Cross-listed courses are counted as separate courses in this tally.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Requirements Committee, 2020-2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chair, Kathleen Scott, Cell Biology and Neuroscience, SAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atif Akin, MGSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melissa Amaral, Office of Academic Services, SAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Beals, Mathematics, SAS</td>
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<td>Samantha Farris, Psychology, SAS</td>
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<td>Tatiana Flores, Art History &amp; Latino and Caribbean Studies, SAS</td>
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<td>Angela Gibney, Mathematics, SAS</td>
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<td>Martha Haviland, Division of Life Sciences, Genetics, SAS</td>
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<td>Thomas Leustek / Xenia Morin, SEBS</td>
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<td>Carter Mathes, English, SAS</td>
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<td>Paul McLean, Sociology, SAS</td>
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<td>Lenore Neigeborn, Office of Academic Services, SAS</td>
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<td>Kerstin Schnatter / Terri Kurtzberg, RBS</td>
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<td>Tamara Sears, Art History SAS</td>
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<td>Kurt Spellmeyer, English Writing Program, SAS</td>
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<td>Sharon Stoerger, Information, Technology, and Informatics, SC&amp;I</td>
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<td>David Wilder, Psychology, SAS</td>
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<td>Lei Yu, Genetics, SAS</td>
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<td>Sharon Bzostek, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, SAS</td>
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<td>David Goldman, Director of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, SAS-OUE</td>
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**Student members**

Juliann Gallo, SAS
Sydni Collins, SAS
Ngozi Okafor, SAS

**Committee Staff:**

Nicole Gangino, Office of Undergraduate Education, SAS
THE CORE CURRICULUM (as revised 5/2018)

For full text of proposal submitted to faculty, see: https://sasoue.rutgers.edu/docman-docs/curriculum/core-curriculum/850-crc-proposal-to-revise-the-core-curriculum-4-3-2018-1/file

Upon completion of the Core Curriculum STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES [CCD; CCO]

Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses and meet at least one goal in both CCD and CCO as follows:

Diversities and Social Inequalities [CCD] (3 credits)

Students must take one degree credit-bearing course that meets one or both of these goals.

CCD-1. Analyze the degree to which forms of human differences and stratifications among social groups shape individual and group experiences of, and perspectives on, contemporary issues. Such differences and stratifications may include race, language, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, abilities, or other social distinctions and their intersections.

CCD-2. Analyze contemporary social justice issues and unbalanced social power systems.

Our Common Future [CCO] (3 credits)

Students must take one degree credit-bearing course that meets one or both of these goals.

CCO-1. Analyze a contemporary global issue from a multidisciplinary perspective.

CCO-2. Analyze the relationship that science and technology have to a contemporary social issue.

AREAS OF INQUIRY

Natural Sciences [NS] (6 credits)

Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses that meet one or both of these goals.

NS-1. Understand and apply basic principles and concepts in the physical or biological sciences.

NS-2. Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, method, evidence, arguments, and theory in scientific analysis.

Historical and Social Analysis [HST; SCL] (6 credits)

Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses and meet both HST and SCL, as follows:

• Historical Analysis [HST] (3 credits)
  Students must take one degree credit-bearing course that meets one or both of these goals.
Appendix A
Core Curriculum (as Revised 5/2018)

HST-1. Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time.

HST-2. Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.

- **Social Analysis [SCL] (3 credits)**
  
  *Students must take one additional degree credit-bearing course that meets one or both of these goals.*

  SCL-1. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.

  SCL-2. Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study particular questions or situations, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.

- **Arts and the Humanities [AH] (6 credits)**
  
  *Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses and meet at least two of these goals.*

  AHo. Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.

  AHp. Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.

  AHq. Understand the nature of human languages and their speakers. AHR. Engage critically in the process of creative expression.

**COGNITIVE SKILLS AND PROCESSES**

- **Writing and Communication [WCR; WCD] (9 credits)**
  
  *Students must take three degree credit-bearing courses, and meet both WCR and WCD as follows:*

  - *All students must take 01:355:101 or its equivalent.*

  - *Students must take one additional credit-bearing course focused on revision that meets this goal:*

    WCR. Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience, and respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, &/or supervisors through successive drafts & revision.

  - *Students must also take one additional credit-bearing course focused on writing in a specific discipline that meets this goal:*

    WCD. Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

- **Quantitative and Formal Reasoning [QQ; Q] (6 credits)**
  
  *Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses and meet both of these goals.*
Appendix A
Core Curriculum (as Revised 5/2018)

QQ. Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information.  
\textit{(includes various quantitative methods courses as well as 640 courses)}

QR. Apply effective and efficient mathematical or other formal processes to reason and to solve problems.  
\textit{(includes 640 courses and formal reasoning courses)}
## Appendix B
Alignment of Core Curriculum Learning Goals with Rutgers University Learning Goals

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<td>CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES</td>
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<td>a. human differences</td>
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<td>b. multidisciplinary current global issue</td>
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<td>c. science and technology-related to social issues</td>
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<td>d. social justice local and global</td>
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<td>NATURAL SCIENCES</td>
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<td>e. basic principles &amp; concepts</td>
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<td>f. apply evidence, method, theory</td>
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<td>SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: shared goals</td>
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<td>HISTORICAL ANALYSIS</td>
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<td>i. analyze historical developments</td>
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<td>SOCIAL ANALYSIS</td>
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<td>m. theories of social organization</td>
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<td>o. application of social analysis</td>
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<td>ARTS AND HUMANITIES</td>
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<td>a. philosophical and theoretical issues</td>
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<td>p. arts and literature</td>
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<td>r. nature of languages</td>
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<td>s. critical creative expression</td>
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<td>WRITING AND COMMUNICATION</td>
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<td>q. communicate complex ideas effectively through writing</td>
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<td>r. communicate effectively in an area of inquiry or discipline</td>
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<td>QUANTITATIVE AND FORMAL REASONING</td>
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<td>w. apply quantitative information</td>
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<td>x. mathematical or formal reasoning</td>
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<td>INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH</td>
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<td>v. employ the research and communication</td>
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<td>z. principles of information systems</td>
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Appendix C
2020–21 Core Assessment Department Summative Report Template

Core Curriculum Learning Goal Assessment
Department Summative Report
Submit by e-mail to core-requirements@sas.rutgers.edu by December 1, 2021

Department/Program: ____________________________________________
Date Range: _________________________________________________
Prepared by: _________________________________________________

The Core Requirements Committee wants to:
• Encourage the discussion and use of assessment results
• Cultivate a culture of reflection on teaching in Core courses
• Encourage departments to think strategically about their participation in the Core
• Learn about and disseminate best practices in Core instruction

To that end, the CRC asks departments filing three-year assessment reports to provide a summative report to supplement the assessment results reported through the Core Reporting System. The CRC is particularly interested in:
• How your department reviews Core assessment results and how you use them, when appropriate, to help inform decisions about courses and curricula.
• How you use Core assessment results to facilitate collaboration and discussion among faculty about teaching and fostering student learning.

If you have any questions about this form or the Core assessment process, please don’t hesitate to contact the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education at core-requirements@sas.rutgers.edu.

Analysis of results

The CRC has provided an Excel spreadsheet with data from the Core reports your department submitted for AY 2020-21. In this space, please identify and discuss any notable patterns in your department’s assessment results.
• What do you learn from these data?
• What are you most pleased about?
• Are there patterns or results that are cause for concern?

The CRC also welcomes any additional information or input from faculty that sheds light on the reported assessment data.

Use of results

In this space, please summarize how your department’s Core assessment results have informed departmental practices and decision-making:
Appendix C
2020–21 Core Assessment Department Summative Report Template

• How do faculty in your department communicate about Core teaching and assessment results?
• How have Core assessment results informed teaching practices, in Core courses or elsewhere?
• Have these results informed your department’s approach to offering Core courses, or other decisions about your department’s general-interest (or major/minor) curriculum?

Feedback on assessment process

The CRC wants to encourage and support useful assessment practices. If Core assessment has influenced your department’s thinking about assessment practices and their value, or if you have any suggestions for improving the assessment process, please describe them here.
Analysis of results

The CRC has provided an Excel spreadsheet with data from the Core reports your department submitted for AY 2020-21. In this space, please identify and discuss any notable patterns in your department’s assessment results.

- What do you learn from these data?
- Are there patterns or results that are cause for concern?

The CRC also welcomes any additional information or input from faculty that sheds light on the reported assessment data.

Division of Life Sciences–Biological Sciences: *Looking across courses, it is clear that faculty feel comfortable that students are meeting NS 1, it is what we are most used to doing and students are doing well. However, faculty are a bit more concerned about NS 2, particularly in those courses that do not have an associated lab (119:115, 154). In addition, the faculty expressed some concern about the greater difficulty they have in helping students to meet CCO 2...*

Philosophy: *Based on an examination of the core assessment reports and syllabi (and where possible, also classroom observations), we are confident that the vast majority of our core-certified courses are indeed teaching and assessing the core-certified learning goals... There are two main ways in which some particular courses could do a better job of achieving their core-certified goals. First, some instructors are still more focused on teaching than on learning: they demonstrate performance of the goals in a sustained way, but don’t provide students themselves with as many opportunities as they might (and in particular, with ‘scaffolded’ tasks) to practice those goals within the context of the course. Second, some instructors set assignments that are not directly aligned with the goals, usually for reasons of exigency in grading.*

French: *In our intermediate course sequence 131-132 and in 137...Rubrics are used to measure progress and assess assignments and language skills. 90% of students reached a good to outstanding level. Students performed better on the final exam compared to the first exam (91 % attained a good level or higher on final, whereas only 70 % did so on the first [exam]). 92% of students in 137 reached a good to outstanding level, with exam results closely matching results in a variety of assessment during the semester...*

"[The] generally positive outcome in a course sequence 215/217-216/218 where very different kinds of assessment exercises were used at very different points in the semester (ranging from brief written homework assignments, and close reading exercises to final exam and term paper essays) suggests that despite different approaches to teaching and assessment techniques in each section we are getting solid and even results for the mastery of all core goals. The strongest percentage of students succeeding in goal t may correspond to the fact that the courses put most of its emphasis on teaching our students to write in French; the weakest percentage in goal o may be explained that this was the first time our department actually assessed goal o. Modified rubrics for goal o may need to be developed, as we did in past years for goals p and t."

Our assessment committee noted that across sections it continues to prove better to demand more rather than less from our students to get the results we aim for in the 215-218 sequence. ... One instructor decided to increase the number of required essays to have better results in her section the next time; another had asked for an additional page per essay and had better results from this than during the previous report; yet another has decided to require more written homework and to count the homework and to give written homework a higher percentage in the grade."
Use of results

In this space, please summarize how your department’s Core assessment results have informed departmental practices and decision-making:

- How do faculty in your department communicate about Core teaching and assessment results?
- How have Core assessment results informed teaching practices, in Core courses or elsewhere?
- Have these results informed your department’s approach to offering Core courses, or other decisions about your department’s general-interest (or major/minor) curriculum?

Division of Life Sciences–Biological Sciences: It is clear that the core assessments have impacted instructor decisions about what they are doing in their classes. Some instructors have added additional assignments and reading quizzes to better support student learning. Other have introduced activities during class (e.g., debates, presentations). Finally, faculty are working on aligning classroom activities, along with exams/assignments, with the core goals... However, not all faculty are fully engaged in the process. Thus, we are hopeful that the DLS Learning Community will help to build connections between faculty so that we can better provide support for those who need it.

Core assessment (along with program assessment) has had a large impact in one area this past year and that is in rethinking 119:199 Concepts in Biology (which was renamed Preparation for General Biology as part of this process). Our assessment results indicated that changes needed to be made in the course. After discussions within DLS, as well as with SAS-EOF and SAS-OUE, we decided to reconfigure the course to have a Workshop/recitation component. But, given our concerns about students meeting NS-2, we did not want to drop the laboratory completely, so the time traditionally allocated to lab is being split in half so that students are still exposed to the process of science, but also have time to practice concepts in biology.

Philosophy: Until recently, instructors in the department have not communicated explicitly about core teaching and assessment much... This has begun to shift over the last two years...

In AY18-19, we focused our assessment and development efforts on our goal of developing in students the ability “to write clearly and in an organized manner” (see our program assessment report for more extensive discussion), which connects most directly with WCR/D. In this connection, we have begun to articulate more explicitly what we take distinctively philosophical writing to be; to develop more explicitly articulated rubrics for assessing the subsidiary features that make for good philosophical writing; and to develop and share a wider range of techniques for inculcating and assessing such writing in all (or at least, many) of our courses. ...we have aimed to foster active, often communal reflection on what we as philosophers value in clear writing (especially, articulate structure that comes close to validity and soundness), and to share with one another particular ways in which we and others find it useful to train and assess this skill.

In AY19-20, we plan to expand these efforts at communication and collaboration to the other core goals, of AHo and QR, and to be more proactive about helping instructors to build development and assessment of these goals into their courses from the very beginning – as opposed to retrospectively selecting the assignment that best demonstrates that they did in fact probe for those goals at the semester’s end.... More specifically, in mid-August we will email all instructors of each of the learning goals, reminding them 1) that their course is core-certified (and that this needs to be articulated on and demonstrated within the syllabus); 2) providing them with the CRC rubrics for the relevant goal; 3) pointing them to an ‘in-house’ collection of goal-relevant exercises and assignments; 4) inviting them to confer with one another about the best ways to achieve the
goal; and 5) asking them to tell us before the semester begins what their chosen assignment will be, how it is aligned with the learning goal, and how their method of assessing that assignment transparently probes for student achievement of the goal. We believe this will both generate more reflective and substantively relevant assignments (and use of rubrics!), while also putting us in a better position to ask instructors what they would change in order to better achieve the specific learning goal the next time they teach the course.

French:

- The Assessment committee allows sharing tasks such as ensuring reports are submitted and analysis of reports; and continuity in learning goals and questions investigated from year to year. Reporting at faculty meeting educates faculty about core goals and keep faculty informed about questions investigated and core reporting schedule
- Core assessment has encouraged our department to develop common rubrics, specific to each level and appropriate to the language of instruction. While introductory to advanced language courses (101-214) and core-certified courses taught in English (241, 242) use standard core rubrics, we have developed revised core rubrics to assess learning goals in courses in literature and culture taught in French. This process has led us to streamline and refine our assessment criteria in courses taught in French
- Core assessment has contributed to identify skill-based learning goals, independent from course content, along with ways we can works towards achieving learning goals in the classroom.
- Students interest in Core courses has encouraged our department to create additional Core courses including courses taught in English.

Feedback on assessment process

The CRC wants to encourage and support useful assessment practices. If Core assessment has influenced your department’s thinking about assessment practices and their value, or if you have any suggestions for improving the assessment process, please describe them here.

Philosophy: …any suggestions about how to foster instructor engagement with the process – and especially, any specific materials to offer instructors as models for their own courses – would be appreciated. (Again, most instructors are doing a good job of fostering the learning goals themselves; the question is helping them to feel better about, and engage more fully and proactively in, the reporting process.) Similarly, any advice about the ‘double-edged sword’ of attracting a larger but different student population to core-certified courses would be appreciated.