

A Wooster Education

Our charge is to assess the new curriculum. To accomplish that we will need to define what we mean by certain goals and to determine what we will accept as success in meeting that goal. The first step in this is to convert graduation requirements into specific and measurable learning objectives.

Converting graduation requirements into specific and measurable learning objectives

The basic structure would be to list each graduation requirement and its associated educational goals. From these we, in consultation with a group of interested faculty, would 'operationalize' these into learning objectives. Once we have described the learning objectives we would identify assessment tools that would help us measure whether these objectives have been met. Finally, we would need to define the criteria for success using that tool. This would again be done in consultation with interested faculty.

On the next page I have tentatively done one graduation requirement, Writing, and have outlined one for Quantitative reasoning. Despite the elaborateness of this document these are not fixed in stone, but I thought it would be useful to have something to guide our discussions. Any aspect of this document can be modified (although changes to the actual learning objectives would be difficult since it would have to go back to EPC and the faculty).

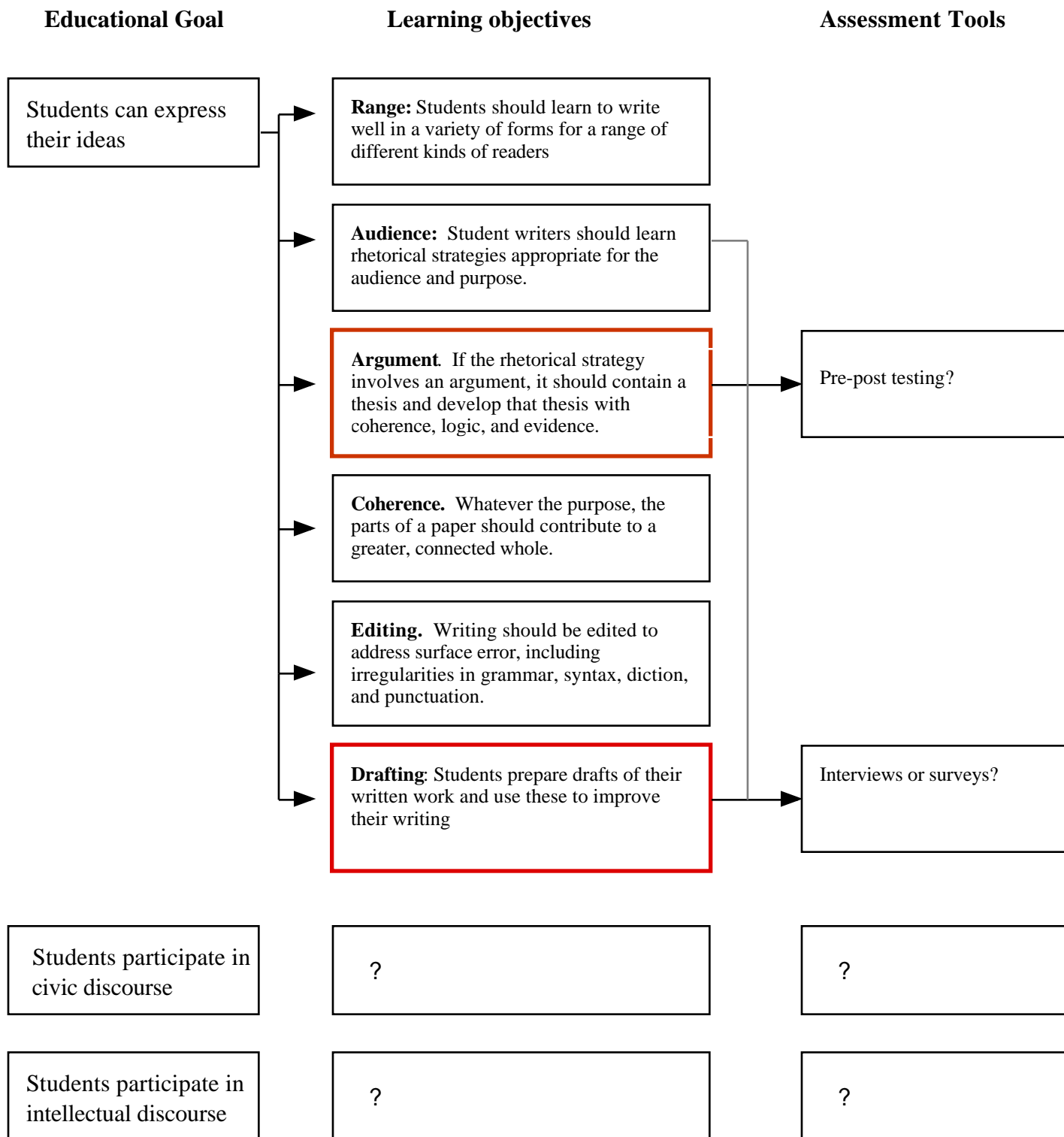
Requirements for graduation: _____

Educational Goal	Learning objectives	Assessment Tools	Criteria for success
[]	[]	[]	[]
[]	[]	[]	[]
[]	[]	[]	[]
[]	[]	[]	[]
[]	[]	[]	[]

Below is an example as to how this might be done. The bold (in red) examples were two that we agreed to pursue last year. I tentatively identified the assessment tools that we might use. This is all subject to change.

Graduation requirement 2: Writing

Big lofty goal: Students will learn the communications skills that will allow them to give expression to their ideas and to participate in both intellectual and civic discourse.



Graduation requirements 5: Quantitative Reasoning

Through this requirement students will understand how quantitative methods are used to model real-world situations.

Educational Goal

Learning objectives

Assessment Tools

understand the varied ways in which mathematics is used in real-world problem solving;

understand the different quantitative methods of representing and analyzing data

develop an appreciation for both the power of quantitative reasoning and the limitations of various quantitative methods.

Our task then is to do this ‘conversion’ for all stated goals in “A Wooster Education”. These include our big overall goals which I think I have summarized below. Each of these need to be linked to the graduation requirements *explicitly*. For each graduation requirement we will need to follow this format of defining learning objectives, identifying assessment tools, and defining the criteria for success.

My summary below of “A Wooster Education” is obviously open to any suggestions you may have.

The College of Wooster seeks to create independent learners. A Wooster education can be characterized by how it identifies the goals of a liberal arts curriculum and how these goals relate to the process of creating engaged and independent learners and informed and involved citizens.

- A liberal arts education should be rich in content and intellectually rigorous, to engage the minds and the imaginations of students and faculty alike. It should enable students to respond critically and creatively to the range of human inquiry into the nature of the physical world, society, and the human self, and to share their ideas orally, in writing, and through the forms of artistic expression.
- A liberal arts education should help students to appreciate the nature of the academic disciplines--as intellectual tools that enable us to think in structured and systematic ways, and for the depth of inquiry they allow. By study in a number of disciplines, students should come to understand the different ways of knowing that are embodied in the disciplines, and by coming to know at least one discipline in depth, students should equip themselves to become scholars engaged in the creation of knowledge. By reflecting on the connections among the disciplines, students should appreciate how the understanding of a subject may be enlarged by different disciplinary approaches, how different kinds of knowledge are interrelated, and how work in one field is affected by developments in others.
- A liberal arts education should prepare students for lives of responsibility in a pluralistic society and instill a breadth of understanding, concern, and commitment. It should provide opportunities to examine values, to reflect upon the richness and diversity of human experience, and to develop the necessary skills to contribute to the discussion of contemporary issues and to communicate effectively to individuals and across cultural differences.

Below are each of the graduation requirements which in effect organize our educational goals. Each of the educational goals may need to be refined or “operationalized”. Once that is done assessment tools need to be identified, and criteria for success determined. The basic structure presented on the first page may be useful for organizing this process as well as the forms developed by the IEA (Forms A-C2). The Writing graduation requirement has tentatively been replicated as a worksheet so that you might see explicitly how this might be done.

Requirements for BA Degree 1: First-Year Seminar in Critical Inquiry

Students are expected to develop the abilities, especially the writing skills, that are essential to critical thinking. These abilities include

- interpreting complex texts
- constructing an argument
- supporting the argument with evidence
- defending the argument orally
- the ability to appreciate and critique multiple perspectives, including one’s own.

Requirements for BA Degree 2: Writing

Students will learn the communications skills that will allow them to give expression to their ideas and to participate in both intellectual and civic discourse.

- **Range.** Students should learn to write well in a variety of forms for a range of different kinds of readers.
- **Audience.** Student writers should learn rhetorical strategies appropriate for the audience and purpose.
- **Argument.** If the rhetorical strategy involves an argument, it should contain a thesis and develop that thesis with coherence, logic, and evidence.
- **Coherence.** Whatever the purpose, the parts of a paper should contribute to a greater, connected whole.
- **Editing.** Writing should be edited to address surface error, including irregularities in grammar, syntax, diction, and punctuation.

Requirements for BA Degree 3: Global and Cultural Perspectives

Through the study of different languages and cultures, students will learn about

- the nature of cultural difference
- the culturally plural world in which they live

Through the study of foreign languages, students will achieve

- a deeper understanding of language as a human phenomenon,
- be able to produce insights into another culture, and
- lay the foundation for communicating in a second language.

Requirements for BA Degree 4: Religious Perspectives

Through the study of religion and religious experience, students will

- learn about the beliefs, institutions, and practices of different religious traditions;
- be able to identify and evaluate belief systems in a fuller context
- better understand cultural, ethical, and moral perspectives that differ from their own.

Requirements for BA Degree 5: Quantitative Reasoning

Through this requirement students will understand how quantitative methods are used to model real-world situations. They will:

- understand the varied ways in which mathematics is used in real-world problem solving;
- understand the different quantitative methods of representing and analyzing data;
- develop an appreciation for both the power of quantitative reasoning and the limitations of various quantitative methods.

Requirements for BA Degree 6: Learning Across the Disciplines

By studying in a number of different disciplines, students will

- learn in a number of content areas
- come to appreciate the range of human inquiry
- understand some of the different ways of knowing that inform the academic disciplines

Through work in the Program in Interdisciplinary Studies or the College's interdepartmental programs,

- students will develop cross-disciplinary understanding
- the ability to make connections between the disciplines.

Requirements for BA Degree 7: Learning in the Major

Students will

- come to understand a particular field of inquiry in depth,
- develop a basis of knowledge and methodological ability that will enable them to participate actively and significantly in a disciplinary community.

Requirements for BA Degree 8: Independent Study

The kind of independence which Wooster seeks to inspire is epitomized in the program of Independent Study, in which students are required to demonstrate

- their capacity for critical inquiry
- their ability to create new knowledge in a disciplinary context
- the necessary skills to share their learning with a larger community

While Independent Study represents the culmination of one's learning in a discipline, the goals of the program go beyond disciplinary training.

- By engaging in the process of Independent Study, students come to regard learning as a process that requires a strong commitment, painstaking research, and the careful development of one's approach to a subject.
- Through I.S., students come to understand not only their chosen subject but also the nature of learning itself, and they can bring this approach to other situations in their lives and careers.
- Because they have developed the resources necessary for lifelong independent learning, they can become effective citizens able to respond to the needs of their societies.