Example 1 – Virginia Tech CLE (Curriculum for General Education)\(^1\)

Virginia Tech has 7 areas of learning outcomes, including “Critical Thinking in the Humanities.”

These courses expect students to do the following:

1. Identify fundamental concepts of the humanities.
2. Analyze texts and other created artifacts using theories and methods of the humanities.
3. Interpret texts and other created artifacts within multiple historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts.
4. Synthesize multiple complex sources and create a coherent narrative or argument.

All students must take 6 hours in this area.

Rubric for Critical Thinking in the Humanities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Indicator</th>
<th>Below Competent</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Above Competent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify fundamental concepts in the humanities.</td>
<td>Recognize humanistic concepts without connections to aesthetic works/objects.</td>
<td>Apply and connect humanistic concepts to aesthetic works/objects.</td>
<td>Apply humanistic concepts to other disciplines.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restrict thinking to established, rigid categories.</td>
<td>Recognize established categories as socially constructed.</td>
<td>Apply other disciplinary concepts to the humanities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Analyze texts and other created artifacts using theories and methods of the humanities.</td>
<td>Accept established canons as given.</td>
<td>Interpret aesthetic works/objects both as part of and beyond established canons.</td>
<td>Pose new fundamental concepts and modes of understanding.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restrict one’s thinking to untheorized “common sense.”</td>
<td>Recognize that there are objects of study beyond the traditional/obvious.</td>
<td>Choose objects of study beyond the traditional/obvious.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take information from sources without interpretation or evaluation.</td>
<td>Apply theory to analyses.</td>
<td>Recognize limits of theories and imagine new theories.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Craft a critical argument based on evidence.</td>
<td>Offer evidence from unconventional sources or viewpoints.</td>
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</tbody>
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\(^1\) Virginia Tech Pathways to General Education [https://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/about/outcomes.html](https://www.pathways.prov.vt.edu/about/outcomes.html)
Example 2 - University of Maryland

Humanities is part of a 4-area general education:

Courses in the foundational humanities disciplines study history and the genres of human creativity. It includes courses in literatures in any language, art, art history, classics, history, music, and music history as well as courses in the foundational disciplines of linguistics and philosophy.

One learning outcome: Demonstrate the ability to formulate a thesis related to a specific topic in the humanities and to support the thesis with evidence and argumentation. [Rubric follows.]

2 http://www.gened.umd.edu/for-faculty/gened-faculty.html; rubrics are here: http://www.gened.umd.edu/for-faculty/faculty-gened-assessment.html
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion for review of student work</th>
<th>Descriptions of levels of student performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulates a thesis</td>
<td>Presents a precise, focused, and defendable thesis that is appropriate to the source material and field; takes into account evidence and opposing viewpoints or judgements; suggests the arguments that will follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshals use of texts (primary and/or secondary) in support of thesis</td>
<td>Supports thesis with organized layers of relevant and meaningful text analysis; provides sophisticated argumentation; demonstrates insightful and independent thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides context/milieu</td>
<td>Provides an in depth analysis of historical, environmental, social and/or intellectual factors through which the text(s) should be examined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents a conclusion</td>
<td>Presents a conclusion that supports the thesis, logically and persuasively derives from the arguments, and establishes its significance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Humanities Rubric was developed by the Humanities Faculty Board, supported by the Office of Undergraduate Studies and the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment with the Humanities instructors upon review of the AAC&U VALUE rubrics and according to standards determined by the Humanities Faculty Board for student performance in the General Education Humanities courses. The rubric defines the standards for student performance in Humanities courses at the University of Maryland.
Example 3 – Inquiry
Both the University of Kentucky and Indiana University use two common student learning outcomes for their “cornerstone” courses that all students take (math, science, arts/humanities, social sciences).

University of Kentucky – Learning Outcome I: Intellectual Inquiry
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of and ability to employ the processes of intellectual inquiry.

Indiana University - Learning Outcomes for “Humanistic and Artistic Ways of Knowing”
- Access, use, and critically evaluate a variety of information sources.
- Apply principles of inquiry to define and analyze complex problems through reasoning and discovery.

Example 4 – Revising Student Learning Outcomes
“The 1997 Campus Learning Objectives were written by faculty, for faculty. The two examples below illustrate high aspirational goals with no clear path for attaining them within the university:

1. Educated persons should develop the skills to understand, accept, and relate to people of different backgrounds and beliefs. In a pluralistic world one should not be provincial or ignorant of other cultures; one’s life is experienced within the context of other races, religions, languages, nationalities, and value systems.
2. Educated persons should be expected to have some understanding of and experience in thinking about moral and ethical problems. A significant quality in educated persons is the ability to question and clarify personal and cultural values and thus be able to make discriminating moral and ethical choices.

The new Campus Learning Outcomes are written purposefully in a clear and concise language, which helps students understand expectations of them:

1.) Communicate clearly and effectively in written and oral forms; 2.) Access, use, and critically evaluate a variety of relevant information sources; 3.) Apply principles of inquiry to define and analyze complex problems through reasoning and discovery; 4.) Demonstrate the ability to relate within a multicultural and digitally connected world; 5.) Demonstrate a deep understanding of a field of study

Each new outcome comes with an explanatory paragraph to provide clarity, which helps faculty members, students, and stakeholders better understand the intent of each outcome. It is clear that the new outcomes are simpler, streamlined, and easier to assess compared with the old objectives.”

3 University of Kentucky. [http://www.uky.edu/registrar/content/uk-core](http://www.uky.edu/registrar/content/uk-core)