

Clark Honors College  
**Assessment Plan**  
2017-18

In 2017-18, the Clark Honors College student community represents approximately 65 different undergraduate majors at the University of Oregon, and the resident and affiliated faculty represent at least 30 disciplinary fields or units across campus. The CHC liberal arts and sciences curriculum replaces the UO General Education requirements for honors students. Thus, the college is characterized by significant intellectual diversity and this inevitably presents a complex picture of the range of learning outcomes for individual courses and those shared across the curriculum.

As a response to the challenge of developing assessment criteria that successfully represent course offerings in the broad fields of Arts & Letters, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, the CHC resident faculty agreed in 2016-17 on a shared set of general learning outcomes that reflect the most common goals of CHC courses and the anticipated outcomes for students who have completed the 4-year multidisciplinary curriculum. These general learning outcomes represent our aim to equip talented, highly-motivated students with an expansive and critical worldview that prepares them to embark on a broad range of professional careers, as well as to develop skills that are valued in leadership positions (critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and communication), and that encourage lifelong learning and intellectual versatility.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Having completed the Clark Honors College curriculum, a student will be able to

1. Apply and demonstrate critical reasoning through the use of appropriate evidence and methods
2. Use effective communication skills, both written and oral, by constructing coherent, logical, and persuasive arguments
3. Develop research competence through inquiry, project-based and active learning based on students' own questions
4. Show initiative, independence and intellectual engagement in the classroom and in assessments
5. Identify and appropriately apply disciplinary methods in the humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences
6. Engage in interdisciplinary inquiry by integrating insights from more than one research approach and by synthesizing diverse perspectives and modes of thinking
7. Demonstrate intercultural competence through linguistic diversity and awareness of and appreciation for diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives

Currently, the CHC curriculum requirements comprise courses at the 200 level (lower division) and at the 400 level (upper division) and culminate in the production and defense of an undergraduate thesis (which is connected to the student's major and assessed by a committee comprised of disciplinary experts and a CHC faculty representative).

The CHC Curriculum Committee, comprising faculty representatives from Arts & Letters, Social Science and Natural Sciences, met in January 2018 to determine initial areas for focused attention in the Assessment Plan of 2017-18 and to articulate some associated challenges on the horizon in 2018-19 that may impact the identification, evaluation and revision of an appropriate and coherent plan for developing college-wide assessment methods and processes in the near-future:

## **Assessment Methods**

The following focus areas relate to assessment of the following learning outcomes in 2017-18:

**LO3:** Develop research competence through inquiry, project-based and active learning based on students' own questions;

**LO6:** Engage in interdisciplinary inquiry by integrating insights from more than one research approach and by synthesizing diverse perspectives and modes of thinking.

In advance of developing measures to determine whether and to what extent students are meeting these learning outcomes, the CHC Curriculum Committee has identified a need to explore the links between the learning outcomes developed by instructional faculty for individual courses at the 200 level and the general CHC learning outcomes, as well as the link between both types of learning outcomes and assessment design.

For the thesis and thesis defense: while the extent to which students meet the learning outcomes may be determined by an analysis of assessment forms completed by the thesis committee, the CHC Curriculum Committee would also like to consider the extent to which these criteria are used consistently and in a way that avoids grade inflation.

## **2017-18 Focus Areas**

### **#1: 200-level: Arts & Letters and Social Sciences sequences, and the 207/209H**

- (a) The CHC Curriculum Committee would like to consider the relationship between course-specific learning outcomes and assessment design and whether individual course instructors may benefit from the development of shared rubrics. Further, there is currently no process for evaluating the connections between individual courses offered by resident and affiliated faculty and their application of general CHC learning outcomes.

Action:

- i. collect course-specific learning outcomes at the 200 level (2017-18);

- ii. request course-specific learning outcomes missing from syllabi;
- iii. communicate general CHC learning outcomes to all instructional faculty in Spring 2018;
- iv. use a sample size of 200-level syllabi (representing all course codes) to evaluate the link between learning outcomes and assessment design and the link between learning outcomes and general CHC learning outcomes (CHC Curriculum Committee);
- v. begin to develop shared rubrics for Arts & Letters, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences linked to general CHC learning outcomes for the 200-level sequences (representative faculty groups).

*Aim: encourage development and application of learning outcomes for individual courses and the use of shared rubrics, and evaluate relevance and application of general learning outcomes at the 200 level.*

- (b) The culmination of the 200-level sequence in Arts & Letters and Social Science is the HC223 and the HC233. The CHC Curriculum Committee has discussed a pervasive student perception that the skills and assessment methods in HC223 and HC233 are incongruent; this is thought to impact student enrollment, as students may choose between them.

Action:

- i. collect syllabi from HC223 and HC233 for 2016-17 and 2017-18;
- ii. discuss link between individual course learning outcomes, assessment design, and general CHC learning outcomes, specifically LO3 (Curriculum Committee; faculty meeting; faculty retreat 2018);
- iii. analyze enrollment and grading data for HC223 and HC233 for the last 3 years to identify possible patterns between class size and outcome (CHC academic coordinator and deans office).

*Aim: evaluate the relationship between general CHC learning outcomes, the assessment methods/criteria, and the results of assessment (grade/outcome).*

**#2: 400-level: CHC thesis assessment criteria**

- (a) The undergraduate thesis defense is the capstone of the CHC curriculum and should offer insight into the achievement of all general CHC outcomes, as specified in the thesis assessment form completed by the thesis committee (primary thesis advisor, second reader, CHC faculty representative). For the purposes of the Assessment Plan, the Curriculum Committee will focus on LO6 and also encourage thesis assessors to use the general CHC learning outcomes in their rationalization of the final outcome (Pass/ Pass with Honors/ Pass with Distinction). A further analysis may suggest whether assessment criteria, based on the general CHC learning outcomes, are applied accurately and consistently by faculty across the UO (who function as primary thesis advisors for CHC students) and also by CHC faculty in their role as committee representatives.

Action:

- i. Request development of a Qualtrics survey from CHC Communications: the survey asks CHC thesis representatives in Spring 2018 to enter the results of the committee's application of the thesis assessment criteria (derived from the general CHC learning outcomes) in their evaluation of the thesis and the thesis defense;

- ii. At the end of the academic year, produce data on the number of theses awarded Fail, Pass, Pass with Honors, and Pass with Distinction in Spring 2018;
- iii. CHC Curriculum Committee analyzes thesis award outcomes with use of the Qualtrics survey;
- iv. A further analysis may explore the link between the thesis award outcomes and the students' CHC course grades to find the courses with the greatest predictive value for their eventual completion of this capstone requirement.

***Aim:** assess students' achievement of general CHC learning outcomes as represented by the production of the undergraduate thesis and the thesis defense; encourage consistent application of thesis assessment criteria and evaluate the effectiveness and value of the current assessment criteria for the thesis and thesis defense and their relationship to the general CHC learning outcomes.*

### 2018-19 Recommended Focus Areas

**LO5:** exploring the impact of the science courses at the 200-level on the learning outcomes for science and non-science majors: currently, CHC science majors are exempted from the HC207/209 requirement and all other students are required to take only one CHC science course, compared to two or three courses from the Arts & Letters and Social Science sequences; further, there is no Natural Sciences 200-level research course available.

**LO2:** the development of effective academic writing skills in the 200-level courses, as both faculty and students identify a tension between time given to class content (topics, readings, discussion) and the time available for writing instruction and high-quality feedback

### **Assessment Plan Challenges**

#1: CHC students defend their theses throughout the academic year (though the majority are scheduled in Spring term), so the results of our analysis of thesis learning methods and outcomes in Spring term 2018 will not be comprehensive;

#2: From Fall 2018, an adjusted CHC faculty model will introduce faculty-in-residence in parallel with resident faculty and affiliated faculty, with the aim of increasing disciplinary diversity and enhancing teaching effectiveness innovative pedagogy; this transitional year may present specific challenges – and also interesting opportunities - to develop a coherent plan for transdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary assessment methods as well as evaluating the success of existing learning outcomes;

#3: In 2017-18, CHC resident faculty committed to a discussion about redesigning the lower-division courses of the CHC curriculum, potentially shifting the present chronological Arts & Letters and Social Sciences sequences to a more evenly-balanced offering of disciplines, including Natural Sciences, and emphasizing the development of advanced academic skills (especially written communication) and interdisciplinary study. This discussion has been deferred to the arrival of the new CHC Dean in AY2018-19.

## Assessment Processes

Learning Objective	AY17-18	AY18-19	AY19-20	AY20-21
LO1 Apply and demonstrate critical reasoning through the use of appropriate evidence and methods				x
LO2 Use effective communication skills, both written and oral, by constructing coherent, logical, and persuasive arguments			x	Revisit
LO3 Develop research competence through inquiry, project-based learning, and active learning based on students' own questions	x	continue		
LO4 Show initiative, independence and intellectual engagement in the classroom and in assessments			x	
LO5 Identify and appropriately apply disciplinary methods in the humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences		x		
LO6 Engage in interdisciplinary inquiry by integrating insights from more than one research approach and by synthesizing diverse perspectives and modes of thinking	x	continue		
LO7 Demonstrate intercultural competence through linguistic diversity and awareness of and appreciation for diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives				x

As the assessment of LO3 and LO6 is limited to Spring term 2018, this assessment will continue into 2018-19.

## Status, Outcomes, Results

The assessment methods and processes related to 1 (a) and (b) and 2 (a) will be discussed in CHC Curriculum Committee (scheduled twice per term); the focus areas will also be agenda items for the CHC faculty meetings during the Spring term 2018 and Fall term 2018. Findings at the close of Spring 2018 will be presented on the agenda of the CHC faculty retreat before the start of Fall term 2018. The CHC Curriculum Committee, in its new formulation in AY2018-19 will prepare the Assessment Report together with the Associate Dean for Students and the Associate Dean for Faculty.

## Decisions, Plans, Recommendations

Recommendations made by CHC faculty and collated by the CHC Curriculum Committee will be integrated into the CHC curriculum revision discussion in AY2018-19, under the direction of the new CHC Dean. Selection of the next set of Learning Outcomes for focused discussion and action will be discussed at the faculty fall retreat. Any changes to the thesis assessment guidelines produced as a result of this Assessment Plan process will be communicated to students, faculty and staff via the CHC website and Canvas instructions.