

Frequently Asked Questions.

- Q How should I design my assessment for the WMU Essential Studies student learning outcomes?
- A The best advice is to keep the assessments simple to administer. There are many types of assessment and using one that can be easily completed by adapting an existing course activity is ideal. Some examples are short answer, essay or multiple choice exam questions, a paper assignment such as a response paper or a research paper, a pre-test and a post test, iclicker responses, oral presentations, etc. (not an exclusive list).

Q How will assessment data be used?

- A The purpose of assessing the student learning outcomes across the program is to assess the program's success at equipping our students with the intellectual skills to succeed in their majors, advanced degrees, and future careers. We are not assessing individual students nor individual courses. Data will be aggregated across the program.

Q When can we expect feedback and/or approval of our course submissions?

- A During fall 2018, faculty will be submitting courses to WMU Essential Studies using the electronic submission process. Six training sessions for faculty have been offered throughout the semester and resources are available on the Faculty Senate WMU Essential Studies webpages.

Submitted courses will be reviewed by college curriculum committees as received in the fall of 2018.

In the spring semester of 2019, the WMU Essential Studies Course Review and Approval Committee will begin reviewing the courses submitted. The committee meeting schedule can be found at:

<https://wmich.edu/facultysenate/committees/wescoursereviewapprovalcmt/wmuescracschedule>

Q Will courses with prerequisites be approved for inclusion in the WMU Essential Studies program?

- A The ideal would be that all WMU Essential Studies are available to all students without any pre-requisite requirements. However, if a student's understanding and success in a course depends on a certain level of prior knowledge, pre-requisites may be required.

Q Is a baccalaureate writing course requirement part of the WMU Essential Studies program?

- A Baccalaureate writing is not a part of the WMU Essential Studies program. Colleges and departments now have the choice concerning their requirements for baccalaureate level writing as a major program requirement.

The WMU Essential Studies program addresses writing by assessing writing in all three levels of the program. Students focus on writing in the Level I - Foundations, Writing course category. Writing is again reinforced and assessed in Level II - Exploration and Discovery, Societies and Cultures course category. Finally, in the Level III - Connections both course categories emphasize the skills developed in Level I - Foundations courses including writing.

Q Does the WMU Essential Studies program set course capacity limits?

A The program suggests capacities for Level III - Connections classes of 25 – 30, mainly due to the assessment of written and oral communication student learning outcomes requirements. Faculty may provide a rationale for course capacities that exceed the 30-student recommendation.

Q Why must classes in WMU Essential Studies program be offered every year?

A One of the tenets of the program is that to be an effective Liberal Arts curriculum students should be able to plan their courses with the knowledge that the courses will be regularly offered. We want students and faculty to be invested in a program that we can deliver.

Q How were the WMU Essential Studies student learning outcomes developed?

A Following a three-year self-study, a recommendation was sent to the Faculty Senate in the form of MOA-16/06 that the general education curriculum be revised to cover 16 learning outcomes under four headings. The MOA can be found at:
https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u370/2018/moa1606-general-education-revision-final_0.pdf

The Faculty Senate appointed Ad Hoc General Education Design Committee developed the WMU Essential Studies curriculum structure based on these WMU Essential Studies program student learning outcomes.

Q What conditions must a course meet to be approved for inclusion in the WMU Essential Studies program?

A Each course will assess the WMU Essential Studies required student learning outcome(s) designated for that level and course category.

A Each course proposal must include a detailed assessment plan pertaining to the WMU Essential Studies required student learning outcomes.

A Assessment data from the WMU Essential Studies required student learning outcome(s) will be submitted to the centralized collection point (system) by the end of each semester/session the course is offered.

A Departments that offer courses in multiple sections will assess the same WMU Essential Studies required student learning outcomes.

A Variable topics courses are not eligible for inclusion in the WMU Essential Studies program.

A Courses at the 5000-level are not eligible for inclusion in the WMU Essential Studies program.

A Courses approved for WMU Essential Studies should be offered a minimum of once an academic year.

A Departments seeking approval for a course that is other than three credit hours will explain the basis for the difference in credit-hour requirements.

A All syllabi must clearly identify the WMU Essential Studies program level, course category, and required student learning outcome(s) addressed in the course.

A Courses from the Level III - Connections course categories will be at the 3000-4000 level.

Q What are the WMU Essential Studies program requirements for students?

A Each student must complete:

1. One course in every category of the WMU Essential Studies curriculum.
2. No more than three courses from any one course prefix.
3. Course that addresses the “develop sensitivity to diversity and inclusion” required student learning outcome.
4. Course that addresses the “develop practices for planetary sustainability” required student learning outcome.
5. Courses that meet the sequencing requirements:

- a. Level I - Foundations course categories of *Writing and Inquiry and Engagement: Critical Thinking in the Arts and Humanities* must be completed as prerequisites for enrolling in Level II - Exploration and Discovery course category *Societies and Cultures*.
- b. Level II - Exploration and Discovery course category *Societies and Cultures* must be completed as a prerequisite for enrolling in Level III - Connections course categories *Local and National Perspectives* and *Global Perspectives*.

Q What are the basic steps for the electronic submission of my course for review?

A Prior to submitting courses, the submitter must have applied for the role of Initiator (see Faculty menu in GoWMU for this approval process).

The electronic submission process is a two-stage process. First, the electronic submission form accessible from GoWMU has to be completed. Second, the syllabus and assessment plan each have to be uploaded into the workflow system.

Step-by-Step Guides are available for these processes on the Faculty Senate website:
<https://wmich.edu/facultysenate/wmuessentialstudies/wmuessentialstudies-interactive-tutorials>

Q Which course categories have the choice of a Diversity and Inclusion or Planetary Sustainability student learning outcome to assess?

A Each of the course categories in Level II - Exploration and Discovery and Level III - Connections have the Diversity and Inclusion and Planetary Sustainability student learning outcomes as a choice for instructors to choose to assess. Thus, there are eight course categories that have these outcomes as a choice from which students must find one course that assess each outcome.

Still have questions?

Email: **wmu-essentialstudies@wmich.edu**