

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
The Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

Minutes

240 SH

March 13, 2025

Attending: Cornelia Lang (chair), Asha Bhandary, Rodica Curtu, Megan Gogerty, Emilie Maurel-Destruel, Julianna Pacheco, Sanvesh Srivastava, DeAndre Steger, Amy Strathman, Rachel Young

Absent: Liz Lundberg (staff)

1. First the committee was joined by Cinda Coggins Mosher (Interim DEO, Rhetoric), Katlyn O'Shaughnessy (Lecturer and PDP Director, Rhetoric), and Matt Shadle (Academic Assessment Coordinator, CLAS UP), to discuss the final items to be resolved related to the assessment of the Rhetoric General Education (GE) CLAS Core area. The primary topics of discussion were the revised learning outcomes for the area, and new names for the courses. The new names of the courses, finalized after the meeting, will be:
 - RHET:1030 Rhetoric will become RHET:1030 Rhetoric: Writing and Communication
 - RHET:1040 Writing and Reading will become RHET:1040 College Writing and Reading
 - RHET:1060 Speaking and Reading will become RHET:1060 College Communication and Reading

The committee discussed the inclusion of the word “rhetoric” in the name of 1030, as a connection between the past and future iterations of this course, and the expansion of “speaking” into “communication” in the name of 1060. The committee also discussed the purpose of the word “college” in the names of 1040 and 1060. The Rhetoric Department wants to emphasize that fulfilling the Rhetoric GE requirement provides students with the writing and communication competence that they will need in the rest of their college courses.

The revised learning outcomes are the same for RHET:1030, RHET:1040, and RHET:1060, with only the beginnings of the descriptions noting the differences among the courses. They read:

“Rhetoric 1030 (Rhetoric: Writing and Communication) emphasizes both writing and speaking skills and consists of scaffolded, formal speaking and writing assignments in addition to informal reading, writing, speaking, and listening assignments.”

“Rhetoric 1040 (College Writing and Reading) emphasizes writing skills and consists of scaffolded, formal writing assignments in addition to informal reading, writing, speaking, and listening assignments.”

“Rhetoric 1060 (College Communication and Reading) emphasizes speaking skills and consists of scaffolded, formal speaking assignments and informal reading, writing, speaking, and listening assignments.”

All three courses’ revised outcomes continue:

“By completing this course, students will be able to:

- analyze arguments across media, assessing their structure and persuasiveness.
- research and articulate multiple perspectives within controversies.
- advocate their own informed positions within controversies using basic rhetorical concepts and college-level writing and communication skills.
- demonstrate familiarity with the uses and ethics of information literacy, including artificial intelligence (AI).”

The committee discussed the ways the revised outcomes capture what students enrolled in 1030, 1040, and 1060 will learn across all three courses, as well as the ways Iowa’s Rhetoric requirement goes beyond traditional approaches to composition and public speaking to include the development of critical reading, analysis, advocacy, and information literacy skills. The committee also discussed the place of AI in Rhetoric’s learning outcomes: contextualizing “familiarity with the uses and ethics” of AI within the larger topic of information literacy will allow instructors an appropriate amount of autonomy in deciding how to incorporate these discussions into their courses while ensuring all students are asked to thoughtfully consider and discuss the role of AI in their educations.

This discussion marks the end of the assessment process for the Rhetoric GE area. Next CLAS UP will work to implement the name changes and communicate with campus partners about the updated learning outcomes.

2. Next the committee welcomed Anushka Gupta (Deputy Director of Justice and Equity, Undergraduate Student Government) for a discussion about attendance policies and students missing class for holy days and religious observances. Anushka, on behalf of USG, presented the need for greater visibility around this policy, so students feel more comfortable discussing their requests for accommodations around religious holy days, and so instructors are more aware of students’ needs and experiences related to this policy.

The committee discussed the [existing University policy](#), which states that “[t]he University is prepared to make reasonable accommodations for students whose religious holy days coincide with their classroom assignments, test schedules, and classroom attendance expectations.” The policy goes on to specify that accommodations should be made in accordance with the University’s human rights policy and should not unfairly burden either instructors or students. The policy states that students must inform instructors of their need for these accommodations as early as possible, ideally in the first few days of class and “no later than the third week of the semester.”

The committee appreciated the value of increasing visibility around this issue. The committee agreed that the policy does not need any changes; rather, there needs to be

more uniform implementation of and communication about the policy. Students need to know that they have to tell instructors about their holidays early in the semester, and instructors need to communicate and follow the timeline set in the policy. UEPC was supportive of the College including more specific text about this policy in the syllabus template, to provide more guidance to both instructors and students. There was a discussion about the challenges of discussing all the relevant College and University policies in the first week of classes each semester and some brainstorming about:

- bundling certain policy discussions (policies and procedures around accommodations related to religious holidays, military service, disabilities, and athletics participation could all be covered at the same time, for example);
- moving some policy discussions to the second week of class;
- addressing some policies via email and ICON announcements (with CLAS perhaps providing a sample email); and
- providing timely reminders later in the semester, such as the week before the first major assessment of a course.

The committee also discussed the value of some additional communication to faculty outside the syllabus template about certain religious holidays and the ways they might affect students; for instance, instructors unfamiliar with Ramadan might not be familiar with the way the last few days of fasting, leading up to Eid, can be the most difficult. Communication to instructors might also address the relationship between religious holidays and students traveling to be with their families, and how instructors might need to accommodate this kind of travel in ways they do not need to accommodate some other kinds of travel. Instructors could also benefit from some guidance about how to handle situations in which students do not follow the timeline for notification set in the policy, to make sure those situations are handled uniformly.

Respectfully submitted,

Asha Bhandary
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Secretary, UEPC