

A SAMPLE CURRICULUM AUDIT OF REQUIRED COURSES

DEPARTMENT Lib Arts

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COURSES IN MAJOR	CONTENT	CRITICAL THINKING	WRITING	COMMUNICATION SPEAKING	CATION COMP TECH	QUANT LIT	INTEGRITY/ ETHICS	PROJECT MANAGEMENT
INTRO	X	X					X	X
METHODS	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
TECH WRIT			X		X			X
TOPICS 1	X							
TOPICS 2	X	X						
TOPICS 3	X	X	X	X				X
HISTORY	X			X				X
STATISTICS	X				X	X		X
INTERNSH.		X					X	
CAREERS		X	X	X				X
CAPSTONE	X	X	X	X	X			X

Here is an example of how a curriculum audit might appear for a department that is moderately invested in active learning, but may not yet have implemented a more systematic approach to ensure effective development across the outcomes that the department elected to represent the five domains. For illustrative purposes, we have made up the set of required courses for a generic major on the left boundary. The 5 domains are written across the top. In addition, the communication domains are broken out in the divisions that this particular department has identified as important to the major. Notice that by sweeping across the matrix, you can tell where their majors may end up having the most formal learning experiences as well as what the department strengths and weaknesses might be. CONTENT: "X" denotes the courses in the matrix where students get solid education in the discipline itself. It would not be impossible to have all of the boxes marked X. If there were particular sub areas identified as goals in the major, one might substitute the subarea in the box rather than X to provide more information. For example, in Business, several courses might be required to achieve competence in economics. The courses that led to that subarea could have an "EC" code rather than an X. Use the coding strategy that makes the most sense to your department to help you figure out your strengths and weaknesses.

CRITICAL THINKING: It may be hard to conceive of a course that wouldn't promote critical thinking, but what we are asking for in your audit involves identifying courses where critical thinking goals are formally implemented. Look at the syllabus. Must the student perform using critical thinking and do they get feedback about the quality of their production? Those are the courses you should identify as contributing toward your graduation goal. If there is no clear opportunity to demonstrate the level of critical thinking consistent with the course, then a blank would signify a lecture/memorization-oriented class. Be as honest as you can in this evaluation so you have some room to grow and improve.

COMMUNICATION: WRITING. Writing appears to be spotty in this major: none in the beginning, some in the middle, more toward the end. The technical writing course might be carrying the burden of training. If students get to the capstone and seem ill prepared for the demands of the course, perhaps there have been insufficient opportunities to practice. Rather than writing an X in the box, you might consider identifying the specific kinds of writing that happen. For example, "research project," "lab report," "group project report," "case notes" all demand different kinds of skills. Does this array of opportunities correspond to the kinds of writing competence and frequency of practice that a graduate should have to develop their skills?

COMMUNICATION; SPEAKING. This audit shows that students may not have much opportunity to develop speaking skills yet there are significant speaking demands later in the curriculum.

COMMUNICATION; COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY & QUANTITATIVE LITERACY. Although these skills may be seen as essential in the major, the audit demonstrates that there may be few committed opportunities in the curriculum where these skills are reinforced.

INTEGRITY/ETHICS. This pattern may be typical across most of our departments as we embark on a new commitment to concentrate in this area. Ethical issues might be addressed briefly on the front end and perhaps not again until students are placed in practical situations that require some ethical background.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT; Because this major is moderately invested in active learning, they score particularly well in giving students opportunities to learn through projects and at the same time hone their self-regulation skills. As we move more intensively into this area, we would expect that students will also get more systematic feedback about the process they enacted to improve their ability to execute projects.

At the conclusion of your review, you should be able to have a good idea of what kinds of learning experiences a prototypical student in your major might have. You also should have a good idea about changes you might like to make to help the major experience be more coherent. That outcome is the goal of conducting the curriculum review.

Tip: Be brutally honest in your appraisal of how your department is functioning from the standpoint of the domains. If the result is not satisfying, it gives you lots of opportunity to change the curriculum and talk about your improvements in future annual reports.