
I. Learning Outcomes

1. Students can describe differences between at least two cultures (one of which is non-western) and can offer explanations or historical contexts for those differences.

2. Students recognize the value and significance of other cultures without romanticizing.

3. Students can identify ways in which cultures influence formulations of knowledge. They will identify ways in which they personally are affected.

4. Students recognize global inequities, injustices, and/or inter-religious issues and commit themselves to thoughtful, concrete responses as part of their Christian commitment.

5. Students will have an appropriate sense of the limits of their global understanding.

II. Data and Interpretation

Instructors in Thinking Globally courses for the 2007-2008 academic year collected student essays in response to the following prompt:

Write a two to three page essay on the subject of the ways in which this course has better equipped you to think globally. Focus on the changes that have occurred in your understanding and thinking. Your essay should be informed by your reflections on the following themes:

- How has your knowledge of global issues expanded?
- How has your appreciation of other cultures’ ways of thinking and world views changed?
- In what ways are you better equipped to think about your own assumptions and predispositions?
- How will what you have learned in this course affect your future choices and actions?

Copies of these essays were collected in the Provost’s office where they are currently stored in paper form. We expect to scan them to electronic archives shortly.

A sampling of these essays was used for inter-rater reliability training at a February 13, 2009 meeting of area instructors. At the conclusion of the meeting, each instructor received a set of additional responses to evaluate. These sets were constructed from 60 randomly selected essays from across the offered courses. To facilitate consistency
checking, two copies were made of each selected essay. The copies were randomly separated into eight-essay sets which were distributed to instructors at the end of the session.

A total of 71 sets of scores were returned to the provost office. These scored essays reflect the work of students from 12 sections representing 10 distinct classes and 9 different instructors. The distribution of rankings and the mean for each of the five areas is found in the following table.

### Summary of Thinking Globally Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage of scores at Level</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>15 (9)</td>
<td>25 (26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Excluding Area V in parentheses

I Cultural Differences  
II Value and Significance  
III Formulation of Knowledge  
IV Issues and Responses  
V Limits of Understanding  

(Expanded definitions of the categories can be found in the Thinking Globally Learning Outcomes and associated rubric.)

It is important to note that Area V: Limits of Understanding was added as an outcome after discussions at the fall 2008 Faculty Retreat. Since Area V was not an identified outcome at the time the assessment was conducted, the 2007-2008 prompt did not explicitly invite students to address the issue. It is therefore to be expected that student responses frequently did not speak to the area. When this category is dropped from the calculations, the average percentage of students performing at level 0 falls to less than 9%.

The previous Thinking Globally assessment study, conducted in fall 2007 using work from spring 2007, produced widely varying results. At the time, it was conjectured that much of the variation was the result of differences in the degree of seriousness with which students completed the assignment. In response, the area instructors changed the prompt and adopted a more uniform context for using it. We decided to gather another set of data using the revised prompt. Depending on subsequent results, we would either make additional changes to the prompt and/or to the courses and do additional
assessment or, if we were satisfied with the results, we would redirect our assessment energies to other areas of the GE curriculum.

The prompt and procedural changes seem to have been effective in reducing course to course variability of effort as the current set of essays exhibit a much more consistent level of effort even when the quality of the response varies. In addition, whether as a result of changes in teaching strategies or as a consequence of taking greater care to call forth students’ best efforts, there are no classes with exceptionally low scores in the current data. In the current data, (excluding results from Area V) only one area mean in one class fell below 1.0. (The meaningfulness of this score is highly questionable since only three evaluated papers were returned for this class.) The most recent results are in sharp contrast with the 2007 results in which over 25% of the class area means fell below 1.0 with most of the sub-1.0 scores hovering around 0.5.

In addition to the summary information in the table above, the data was reviewed for patterns of variation due to evaluators and courses/sections.

The scores of pairs of evaluators who were given the same papers were compared. In addition, the average scores of the evaluators were compared in each of the categories. In general, the evaluators seemed to be relatively consistent in the way that papers were classified, but there is room for improvement. Both methods of analysis were consistent in identifying one pair of evaluators that scored papers more harshly and another pair that scored papers rather more generously. Additional training should be planned for in the next assessment cycle.

Mean scores in each area were computed for each of the classes. While the total number of papers read from any one particular course was small enough that strong conclusions are not warranted, instructors were informed when one or more area averages fell into the top or bottom 15%. Those with scores in the bottom 15% were encouraged to review additional papers to check on the reliability of the reported results and to consider what steps they might take to improve their students’ development. Instructors in with top 15% scores will be asked to share what they are doing at a general meeting of area instructors.

It was conjectured that humanities courses such as World Literature and World Art would not prove as effective in helping students develop a global perspective as Social Science courses would be. This did not prove to be the case. In fact, the highest average course scores were found among these classes.

A meeting of area instructors was held September 9, 2009 to discussion the combined results.

**III. Next Steps**

In 2007, a target average score of 1.5 was set for areas I (Cultural Differences), II (Value and Significance) and IV (Issues and Responses). These values were selected
since level-3 scores reflect performance that goes beyond the instruction that takes place in the Thinking Globally courses. It represents a target of personal synthesis and application toward which we hope to have launched our students. Since area III (Formulation of Knowledge) involves rather more sophisticated processing, we expected scores in this area to be somewhat lower and would be content with a mean score of 1.25.

In the 2007 assessment cycle, this criterion was met (barely) in only one area. In the current assessment cycle, the standard was met in each of the established areas. While the mean for the newly added area V (Limits of Understanding) fell below 1.5, this seems to be largely due to the fact than the prompt did not elicit a relevant response from students. Given this evidence of area success, we the next planned Thinking Globally assessment will take place in the 2011-2012 academic year.

One additional meeting is planned for September 9, 2009 to bring closure to the current round of assessment. The meeting had two agenda items beyond reviewing the final report.

1. Instructors with high scores in an area will be encouraged to share what they are doing that might have contributed to their success.

2. There is a sense among at least some faculty teaching in this area that the current prompt is artificial. As a result, the assessment essay typically is not assigned as an integral part of the course. Consequently, students may not take the exercise as seriously as other assignments. In addition, the time spent administering the particular assessment instrument may come at the expense of other work in the course. Faculty teaching Thinking Globally courses will discuss ways in which the assessment process can be more naturally integrated into the courses by making use of existing work that students are already producing. This conversation will be continued in the fall of 2011 and will form the starting point for the assessment to be conducted that academic year.