

## **FIRST YEAR NAVIGATION (FY) COMPETENCY**

### **Definition**

First Year Experience programs take a variety of forms to provide academic and co-curricular support as students begin university life. This competency allows first year students to transition into the University and to appreciate the values, culture, and resources of the academic community. WCSU's student body is especially in need of such support because of its diversity, including traditional first-year students, students from at-risk communities, active and military veterans, those at varying levels of academic and social preparation, first and second generation Americans, and students who are the first members of their families to attend college. Our students need a program that orients them to the expectations, resources, requirements, and rewards of their WCSU experience.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the First Year Navigation Competency, students will be able to:

- Understand the physical and virtual WCSU campus;

- Identify resources in the university community, including faculty, staff, and administration;

- Understand the necessary procedures that contribute to academic success and graduation at Western;

- Understand the culture and expectations of academics at the university level;  
and

- Understand habits and practices necessary for continuing academic success.

## **CRITICAL THINKING COMPETENCY**

### **Definition**

Critical thinking is an intellectual and analytical activity through which students develop the ability to recognize, examine, critique and synthesize arguments. It consists of two key components: acquiring the skills to assess the clarity, accuracy, relevance, and strength of arguments, and developing habits of mind to utilize those skills. Courses in critical thinking move beyond the mere acquisition of information to the examination of the nature and effectiveness of argument within a specific discipline.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the Critical Thinking Competency, students will be able to:

Recognize arguments: Students will distinguish between arguments and unsupported claims or opinions, and identify the central claim of an argument;

Analyze arguments: Students will determine the components of a given argument and their relation to the whole;

Critique arguments: Students will evaluate assumptions and the quality and reliability of evidence. They will apply relevant criteria for evaluating different types of arguments, including potential counter-arguments;

Synthesize arguments: Students will formulate good arguments, which justify positions by bringing together reasons and evidence in a coherent structure that provides persuasive support for a conclusion; and

Apply arguments: Students will apply critical thinking through a discipline-specific method.

## **CREATIVE PROCESS COMPETENCY**

### **Definition**

The creative process begins with an understanding of the specific discipline or form involved. This knowledge serves as a foundation for inspiration and imagination. An element of risk is typically involved. This inspiration is then developed and explored through a process of discovery and research leading to a preliminary version of the creative work. The student, his or her peers, and the instructing faculty member evaluate this preliminary version in order to refine the idea in its current state; it is incumbent upon the student to demonstrate and/or defend their process for creating his/her work. The resulting modified creative work is then presented as a tangible finished product.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the Creative Process Competency, students will be able to:

Demonstrate an understanding of the discipline or form;

Demonstrate an identifiable process of exploration and discovery;

Demonstrate self-evaluation of the work;

Present the work to peers; and

Demonstrate how feedback was received and implemented in the finished product.

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMPETENCY**

### **Definition**

The educated person has an understanding of the relationships between good health and personal and societal choices. Such a person appreciates that good physical health improves quality of life and cognitive functioning, understands which lifestyle choices enhance physical and mental well-being, and knows how to implement those choices. Wellness is an active, lifelong process of becoming aware of choices and making decisions that allow individuals and communities to thrive. Beyond the self, the educated person has an awareness of sustainability, with a consciousness of his or her relationship to the planet that supports life.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the Health and Wellness Competency, students will be able to:

Investigate the relationships between personal behavioral choices and health outcomes in such critical areas as fitness, diet, substance use and stress management;

Evaluate evidenced-based interventions that lead to healthier individuals and societies;

Explore ethical perspectives regarding individual and social rights to health and wellness; and

Examine the actions necessary to adopt sustainable lifestyles through individual, local, societal or global behavior change, and evaluate potential outcomes.

## **INFORMATION LITERACY COMPETENCY**

### **Definition**

An educated person is a critical listener and reader. He or she is able to find information, comprehend and integrate it, and critically evaluate its credibility and the credibility of its sources. Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the Information Literacy Competency, students will be able to:

Access, navigate, identify, and evaluate information that is appropriate for their need(s) and audience(s);

Understand the ethical dimensions of the use of information;

Synthesize information to broaden knowledge and experiences and produce both independent and collaborative work;

Apply current, relevant technologies to solve problems, complete projects, and make informed decisions; and

Understand the economic, legal, or social issues surrounding the ownership, access and use of information and relevant technologies.

## **INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY**

### **Definition**

Intercultural competence is a life-long process that includes the development of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills to support effective and appropriate insight and/or interaction in a variety of cultural contexts. Intercultural competence is defined by the following general characteristics: (1) knowledge about cultures, including knowledge about issues that can arise when members of diverse cultures interact; (2) receptive attitudes to learning about and maintaining contact with diverse others; and (3) skills required to draw upon both knowledge and attitudes when learning about and/or interacting with others from diverse cultures.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the Intercultural Competency, students will be able to:

Recognize their own cultural assumptions and express openness to learning about and/or interacting with culturally diverse others;

Ask questions about diverse cultures and seek answers to these questions;

Demonstrate understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of diverse cultures in relation to cultural history, values, politics, communication, economy, beliefs, and/or practices;

Identify cultural differences in verbal and/or nonverbal communication and demonstrate awareness that misunderstandings can occur based on those differences; and

Apply at least one basic method of analyzing culture through a discipline-specific methodology.

## **ORAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY**

### **Definition**

Oral communication is a prepared presentation that demonstrates knowledge of a selected topic and attempts to move an audience. This process involves the thoughtful evaluation of a topic, the clear, concise expression of an argument, the use of appropriate evidence in support of the argument, the effective engagement of the intended audience, and the polished delivery of a well-crafted presentation. Oral communication competency grows alongside the development of strong critical thinking skills.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the Oral Communication Competency, students will be able to:

Determine scope: Students will define the boundaries of the argument in a manner that reflects knowledge of the topic;

Use evidence: Students will identify and cite relevant and appropriate evidence;

Construct arguments: Students will synthesize evidence in support of the central argument;

Respond to context: Students will demonstrate understanding of the audience and the situation; and

Control delivery: Students will deliver well-crafted, polished presentations.

## QUANTITATIVE REASONING COMPETENCY

### Definition

Quantitative reasoning is the ability to recognize, interpret, and use quantitative information in a variety of situations in order to understand and create arguments supported by quantitative evidence. Students possessing quantitative reasoning skills will be able to solve problems, draw conclusions, and make informed decisions based on quantitative information. Further, they will be able to communicate their ideas or conclusions in a variety of appropriate formats (i.e. using words, tables, graphs, equations, etc).

### Outcomes

Upon completion of the Quantitative Reasoning Competency, students will be able to:

Analyze: Make judgments and draw conclusions about quantitative information while recognizing its limitations;

Apply: Use quantitative principles, theories, and methods to solve real world problems;

Calculate: Apply appropriate computational procedures to solve problems;

Interpret: Explain quantitative information presented in textual, visual, or notational forms; and

Represent: Present quantitative information in a clear and appropriate form.

## **SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY COMPETENCY**

### **Definition**

Science is a way of knowing based on empirical observation and verification. Scientific inquiry involves asking appropriate questions, designing and implementing strategies to answer those questions, and interpreting and explaining the results within a disciplinary/theoretical context.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the Scientific Inquiry Competency, students will be able to:

- Develop research questions or hypotheses through induction or deduction;
- Design a strategy to test or address the hypothesis or research question;
- Implement the research design strategy with faculty oversight;
- Interpret the results within the context of the discipline; and
- Effectively communicate and defend outcomes 1 - 4.

## **WRITING INTENSIVE COMPETENCY TIER II**

### **Definition**

Writing is at the core of critical thinking and active learning. To foster the intellectual growth of students, writing must be incorporated beyond the level of Composition I. The second tier Writing Intensive competency encourages students to learn and think in ways that cannot be attained through other pedagogical patterns. It requires targeted instruction to allow students to learn more about the subject matter through writing and to learn how to improve their writing. The writing intensive competency must also involve research and a process of revision.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the Tier II Writing Intensive Competency, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate writing as a process that is guided by revision in response to writing instruction and instructor feedback on multiple projects;
- Apply formal and informal writing strategies to develop an understanding of course content;
- Demonstrate the ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, incorporate, and attribute primary and secondary sources according to rhetorical conventions as appropriate to the discipline;
- Produce a minimum of 6,000 words of writing over the semester, of which at least 4,000 words are edited, polished prose according to the conventions of Standard American English; and
- Produce several writing projects, including one project of at least 1,500 words that develops and sustains a source-supported argument and requires revision.

## **WRITING INTENSIVE COMPETENCY TIER III**

### **Definition**

Three tiers of the writing competency allow students to develop their writing ability through continued practice. Tier 1 (Composition I or its equivalent) focuses on writing as a process and as a method of learning; on understanding and using various rhetorical strategies in writing; and on organization, audience, tone, voice, and the conventions of Standard American English and academic documentation. Tier II continues to support the Tier I outcomes and further emphasizes targeted instruction and strategies for research-based writing and revision. As the culminating writing experience, Tier III focuses on a discipline-specific synthesis of the skills acquired in the earlier tiers.

### **Outcomes**

Upon completion of the Tier III Writing Competency, students will be able to:

Design, propose, sustain, and write a source-supported project on a topic that is appropriate to the discipline;

Incorporate instructor feedback into professional-quality writing in genres that are most relevant to the discipline;

Apply specialized conventions of writing within the discipline, including grammar, mechanics, diction, syntax, format, source attribution, and specific languages.

## **Culminating General Education Experience**

The primary goal of the general education curriculum is to cultivate the capacity for life-long learning. This can be demonstrated in the student's ability to:

- Evaluate and draw defensible conclusions from information and other artifacts;
- Synthesize material from different bodies of knowledge; and
- Communicate ideas and arguments in forms appropriate to the discipline.

Pre-requisites for CGE courses are the successful completion of at least one exposure to each of the general education competencies (FY, CP, CT, HW, IC, IL, OC, QR, SI, and WI).

Any three or four hundred level course, including a disciplinary capstone, can qualify for the CGE designation. No instruction specific to life-long learning is required, but there must be one assignment or project that will illustrate the capabilities described above.

## RESOURCES

<http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/inquiry.aspx>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationalism-empiricism/>

TAP Scientific Reasoning

TAP Scientific Knowledge and Understanding

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2010). Quantitative literacy. In T.L. Rhodes (Ed.), *Assessing outcomes and improving achievement: Tips and tools for using rubrics*. Washington, DC.

Draft of the ConnSCU General Education Assessment Rubric for Quantitative Reasoning.

Bennett, J., Brown K., Cartwright, C., Davis, M., Deardorff, D., Hearn-Chung Gin, D., & Smith, D., 2010

Unesco, 2011.