Committee members: Abena Aidoo (CEHD), Melissa Broeckelman-Post (CHSS, chair), Lorelei Crerar (COS), Christopher DiTeresi (CHSS), Cheryl Druehl (Business), Kelly Dunne (CHSS), Jason Kinser (COS), Tamara Maddox (VSE), Laura Poms (CHHS), Mara Schoeny (S-CAR), Ali Weinstein (CHHS), Courtney Wooten (CHSS), Stephanie Foster (ex-officio), Shelley Reid (ex-officio), Bethany Usher (ex-officio)

1. Melissa Broeckelman-Post was elected Chair of the Mason Core Committee. Mara Schoeny and Ali Weinstein were elected ad hoc co-chairs.

2. While our meetings have always been open, we began to extend invitations to faculty who were proposing courses to attend the meetings to talk about their courses and answer questions on the day that we were reviewing their course proposals beginning in the spring semester. One of our goals was to add more transparency and communication to the review process, and the committee has enjoyed talking with faculty about their courses, and having questions about courses answered during the meetings has helped to facilitate more timely approval of course proposals.

3. The following courses were approved for inclusion in the Mason Core:
   a. ENGR 398: Applied Engineering Abroad (GU)
   b. PHYS 410: Computational Physics Capstone (CAP)
   c. CHEM 271: General Chemistry for Engineers Lecture (NSL)
   d. CHEM 272: General Chemistry for Engineers Lab (NSL)
   e. RHBS 455: Research in Rehabilitation Science (CAP)
   f. MUSI 106: Fundamentals of Rock, Blues, and Jazz (ART)
   g. CDS 292: Introduction to Social Network Analysis (QR)
   h. NEUR 101: Introduction to Neuroscience (NSNL)
   i. ARTH 343: The Art of Venice (ART)
   j. ELED 358: Children's Literature for Teaching in Diverse Settings (LIT)
   k. ELED 490: Internship in Elementary Education (CAP)
   l. HDFS 200: Individual and Family Development (SBS)
   m. ARTH 104: Design in the 20th Century (ART)
   n. HIST 354: Modern China (GU)

4. The following courses were rolled back for editing or for more significant revision:
   a. SOCI 431: Survey Research (IT)
   b. ARTH 311: Design of Cities (ART)
   c. PHYS 170: Introductory and Modern Physics I (NSL)
   d. PHYS 270: Introductory and Modern Physics II (NSL)
   e. FRSC 101: Principles of Forensic Science (NSNL)
   f. GGS 110: Introduction to Geoinformation Technologies (IT)

5. Assessment activity for the following Mason Core categories:
   a. Fall 2018:
      i. Assessment reports were released for materials that were collected in spring 2018 from Mason Core Synthesis, Capstone, and Writing Intensive courses. Several open meetings were held for faculty to discuss the results and consider improvements to their courses.
ii. Faculty development workshops were held in partnership with the Stearns Center to prepare faculty for fall assessment. Faculty submitted course materials for assessment in Arts, Literature, Social and Behavioral Sciences; all Mason Core courses at Mason Korea, and courses mapped to Mason Core outcomes in the Honors College curriculum.

iii. Faculty working groups studied options and made recommendations for assessment of Quantitative Reasoning and IT and Computing courses.

b. Spring 2019:
   i. Faculty development workshops were held in partnership with the Stearns Center to prepare faculty for spring assessment. Faculty are currently submitting course materials for assessment for Quantitative Reasoning and IT and Computing courses (due at end of spring semester). Reviews will take place in summer 2019.
   ii. In partnership with the English Composition program and INTO Mason, student work samples are being collected for assessment of first-year composition courses.
   iii. Mason faculty teams reviewed student work samples for Arts, Literature, Social and Behavioral Sciences, all Mason Core courses at Mason Korea, and the Honors College. Reports will be available by fall 2019.
   iv. A faculty working group has been studying best practices for assessment of student learning in Mason Core courses in the Natural Sciences. Recommendations and assessment tools are currently being developed for use in the fall 2019 assessment.
   v. A faculty learning community has been meeting all semester to study pedagogical approaches and assessment strategies for team-based learning in the Mason Core. Lessons and recommendations will be shared at Innovations in Teaching and Learning conference in fall 2019.

c. Details about the Mason Core assessment cycle are available at https://masoncore.gmu.edu/assessment/

6. In order to clarify some elements of the course submission, assessment, and reapproval process, the following three resolutions were passed:
   a. Courses that submit no assessment materials when required to do may lose their Mason Core designation.
   b. Courses that do not demonstrate that they meet the Mason Core outcomes for their approved category will be given formative feedback after a review of the Mason Core committee and an opportunity to revise their courses. After that revision window, courses that the Mason Core Committee determines do not meet the outcomes will lose their Mason Core designation.
   c. Course revisions that involve ONLY a change in course number will go through an abbreviated administrative review instead of full committee review unless there is a concern about whether the course is meeting the outcomes.

7. Three members of the committee attended the AAC&U General Education and Assessment Conference in February. A team of five will also attend the AAC&U Institute in Summer 2019 to begin planning next steps for the Mason Core.
In comparing results from a 2017 national study using samples of student work from seniors at 4-year institutions, this assessment suggests that Mason students perform similarly to their peers on combined ratings of Advanced + Capstone.

**VALUE Rubric Assessment**

Results are based on N=230 randomly selected student work samples from Mason Core Synthesis and Capstone courses from spring 2018, rated on the Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric. Each sample received two ratings by trained faculty evaluators, for a total of 460 ratings. The rubric uses four performance descriptors: Benchmark, Emerging Milestone, Advanced Milestone, and Capstone, and an option for "no evidence." *All comparison tests were Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U, p < .05. Source: https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/critical-thinking

22% of samples were rated as "no evidence" for "Conclusions & Outcomes," and 20% for "Context & Assumptions," meaning that students did not apply the outcome, or it was not required.

There were no observed differences between students who started at Mason as freshmen and transfer students (n=205 freshmen; n=245 transfer).*

There were no observed differences in performance between juniors and seniors on any of the critical thinking outcomes (n=58 juniors; n=386 seniors).*

How do Mason Students Compare?

In comparing results from a 2017 national study using samples of student work from seniors at 4-year institutions, this assessment suggests that Mason students perform similarly to their peers on combined ratings of Advanced + Capstone.

Similar to Mason, national data revealed that students were rated lowest for "Context & Assumptions" and "Conclusions & Related Outcomes."

Note: Results for this chart are adjusted to include "no evidence" ratings, while the chart above excludes them.

[^1]: https://www.aacu.org/OnSolidGroundVALUE

George Mason University | https://masoncore.gmu.edu/assessment/
What is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. The capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways; thinking innovatively; and intellectual risk taking – all components of creative thinking – is part of the development of critical thinking.

Course Learning Outcomes

In Mason Core Synthesis and Capstone Courses, students will apply critical thinking skills to:

- Evaluate the quality, credibility and limitations of an argument or a solution using appropriate evidence or resources, OR,
- Judge the quality or value of an idea, work, or principle based on appropriate analytics and standards

Synthesis and Capstone Courses Across the Colleges

Course Enrollment by College and Department

In spring 2018, 180 Synthesis and Capstone course sections were taught in 49 departments across ten colleges.

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In comparing results from a 2017 national study\(^*\) using samples of student work from seniors at 4-year institutions, this assessment suggests that Mason students perform similarly to their peers on combined ratings of Advanced + Capstone.

**VALUE Rubric Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Capstone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context &amp; Purpose</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Development</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre &amp; Disciplinary Conventions</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources &amp; Evidence</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax &amp; Mechanics</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^*\)All comparison tests were Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U, \(p < .05\).

Source: https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/written-communication

**Mason Core Assessment Spring 2018**

**Written Communication in the Major**

22% of samples were rated as "no evidence" for the outcome "Sources & Evidence," meaning that students did not use sources or evidence, or the writing assignment did not require it.

Students who started at Mason as freshmen performed an average 8-15 points higher on all written communication outcomes than transfer students (\(n=185\) freshmen; \(n=195\) transfer).*

There were no observed differences in performance between juniors and seniors on any of the written communication outcomes (\(n=67\) juniors; \(n=314\) seniors).*

Results are based on \(N=385\) randomly selected student work samples from Writing Intensive in the Major courses from spring 2018, rated on the Written Communication VALUE Rubric. Each sample received two ratings by trained faculty evaluators, for a total of 770 ratings. The rubric uses four performance descriptors: Benchmark, Emerging Milestone, Advanced Milestone, and Capstone, and an option for "no evidence." *All comparison tests were Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney \(U, p < .05\). Source: https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/written-communication

**How do Mason Students Compare?**

In comparing results from a 2017 national study\(^*\) using samples of student work from seniors at 4-year institutions, this assessment suggests that Mason students perform similarly to their peers on combined ratings of Advanced + Capstone.

Similar to Mason, national data revealed that students were least likely to show evidence of Sources & Evidence in their writing assignments.

Note: Results for this chart are adjusted to include "no evidence" ratings, while the chart above excludes them.

\(^*\) https://www.aacu.org/OnSolidGroundVALUE

George Mason University | https://masoncore.gmu.edu/assessment/
Writing Intensive in the Major Courses Spring 2018

What makes a course Writing Intensive?

Writing Intensive (WI) in the Major courses instruct students in the main types of writing practiced by members of the discipline. The course must give students opportunities to draft and revise based on instructor feedback so that they can practice the writing processes, forms, and conventions expected in the field.

- Section size is limited to 35
- WI courses must be offered and taken in the major
- WI courses must carry 3-credits and be offered at the 300 or 400 level
- Faculty devote significant time to writing
- Students receive instructor feedback on their writing
- Students revise at least one substantive assignment using feedback
- All writing assignments count substantially toward the final grades. Students write at least 3500 words over two or more assignments.

Writing Intensive Courses Across the Colleges

Course Enrollment by College and Department

In spring 2018, 173 Writing Intensive in the Major course sections were taught in 54 departments across nine colleges.