

Feedback Report

UCA Core Council Assessment sub-committee

December 2018

Re: Review of LD Core Responsible Living Course Offerings

Thank you for providing the information requested by the sub-committee. The assessment sub-committee is diligently reviewing all courses in the Lower Division Core Responsible Living area to assure that our students are receiving a shared, common experience across the university as regards this Core competency. Your participation is greatly appreciated in this endeavor. The sub-committee would like to provide you with this feedback report as an informational item. If you have questions, concerns, or comments please direct those to the Director of the UCA Core, Jake Held ([jmheld@uca.edu](mailto:jmheld@uca.edu))

Course Prefix and Number: ACAD 1300

Course Title: Journeys to Success

**Syllabus:** Any syllabus for a course in the UCA Core must include language indicating the course's relative position within the UCA Core. The required boilerplate language can be located here: <http://uca.edu/academicaffairs/publications-information/>

**Lower Division Core standards:** Does 50% of the course content directly align to the Core outcomes for the goal under with the course assesses? (NB: This is calculated by considering course objectives, readings, lecture/discussion, and assignments as indicated by the course syllabus and provided work.)

The material provided for ACAD 1300 was sufficient in order for the sub-committee to make an informed evaluation in this regard.

ACAD 1300 is categorized under Goal B (Well-Being) of the Responsible Living category. The outcomes for Goal B are:

**Issue Recognition:** Recognition of various issues that affect well-being and their interconnections in complex contexts. The interconnections of issues in complex contexts refers to the obvious and subtle connections between/among the sub-parts or situational conditions of a scenario that bring two or more dilemmas/issues into the problem (e.g., relationship of health screenings to increased health care costs).

**Analysis of Knowledge:** the ability to extend discipline based knowledge to decision making and/or develop a recommended course of action based on discipline specific knowledge.

**Impact of Decisions:** The consequences—positive or negative—of decisions on the well-being of self, others, society and/or environment(s).

The full rubric can be located here: <http://uca.edu/core/assessment/>

As a lower division Core course, this course ought to provide students with the foundational skills necessary to begin developing the outcomes indicated under the rubric. In order to provide such an experience it is necessary that students be routinely exposed to these ideas and

offered multiple opportunities to develop these skills. The sub-committee found that overall ACAD 1300 fits well with the stated outcomes of the responsible living category, specifically Goal B (well being). The assignments provide opportunities for students to develop the skills under Goal B, and there are many opportunities for them to receive feedback and reinforce those skills.

**Alignment:** Does the course as a whole align well to the Core outcomes for the goal under which it is assessed?

The only concerns raised by the sub-committee involved the “Analysis of Knowledge” outcome of Goal B, specifically the requirement that students “extend discipline based knowledge” to problems and develop courses of action “based on discipline specific knowledge.” As a student success course the assignments developed and required are surely rooted in educational theory and this may well constitute the “discipline” of ACAD 1300. However, it was unclear how students were being asked to develop discipline based knowledge in this regard. That is, are they being asked to learn and understand educational theory or the psychological theoretical framework undergirding their exercises? Is this academic/theoretical framework presented to them so that they can apply this knowledge to new or novel problems beyond the exercises presented to them in class? That is, beyond learning success strategies, are they learning an academic discipline that they can apply to problem sets?

In addition, the textbook chosen, although focusing on student success did not appear to be from an expert in any specific academic discipline, but rather a book from an educational journalist collating extant research into a popular format. In this regard, the concern was that that the requirement of the rubric, that a student extend disciplinary knowledge to problems, which is about the student developing an academic understanding of how a specific discipline can be extended to understand, address, and resolve new or novel problem sets, was not being explicitly met. So the course’s connection to the promotion and development of disciplinary knowledge (whether that be educational or psychological theory) was unclear. The committee was concerned that simply giving students exercises and having them read a popular, journalistic account of educational theory wouldn’t provide students with an academic experience. Although student success courses are of obvious value in terms of retention and persistence, in so far as the UCA Core is an academically based general education program rooted in specific academic goals and outcomes all courses in the program need to be clearly rooted in, and promote, academic experiences that align to these goals and outcomes. ACAD’s unique structure of being a success course without a clear disciplinary grounding and often taught by a variety of instructors with diverse educational backgrounds makes it difficult to pigeonhole according to UCA Core goals.

Consider, as did the committee, the case of a course like EXSS 1320. Although students will do self-assessment in terms of healthy behaviors, and will be asked to engage in healthier lifestyle choices, they are also provided with the physiological theory that undergirds these recommendations so as they learn about positive behaviors they are learning the academic foundations to why those behaviors are beneficial so they can extend that knowledge beyond

the exercises they engage in in class. The course is thus fundamentally academic, it is a physiology/wellness course, even though it teaches the material through practical exercises and focuses on individual student well being. We believe ACAD could provide a similar experience in terms of academic well-being.

But the committee was of the opinion that this issue could be readily remedied.

In summary, although the course aligns for the most part to the outcomes, the lack of a clear disciplinary foundation to the course or academic curriculum left the committee unsettled. Please see our recommendations below with regard to how we believe the course could resolve these concerns.

**Improvement:** Suggestions for how the course might optimize its role within the UCA Core.

Please include required Core syllabus language in all syllabi for ACAD 1300.

Include language in the syllabus and in relevant assignments that indicates how the disciplinary content of the course (educational psychology...) is connected to the learning outcomes of the course/assignments in order to reinforce the disciplinary knowledge components of the course as an academic course in the UCA Core. Since we know that the content of the course is grounded in educational theory and research, that should be made explicit to students so they are learning not merely success strategies but the psychology/theory/data behind them, thus providing students with the academic foundations to the work in which they are engaging. This may occur in the classroom already, however, the information we were provided didn't clearly indicate the extent to which students learn the academic/disciplinary foundations to the work they are doing in ACAD 1300.