

Baccalaureate Core Committee

As described by the Baccalaureate Core Committee (BCC), the goals of the Baccalaureate Core (OSU's General Education requirement), are to:

- Strengthen critical thinking and communication skills across disciplines.
- Ensure that all OSU students acquire a basic understanding and appreciation for the physical and biological sciences, humanities and the arts, and the social sciences.
- Strengthen the international dimensions of the University's curriculum.
- Encourage interdisciplinary interaction among students and faculty.

More generally, as is ubiquitous in the "General Education" component of a liberal education, the Baccalaureate Core is intended to develop a depth of learning in students that leads to a more thoughtful and productive global citizenship. Bloom, et al., developed a taxonomy as a set of standard classifications to reflect the depth of the student learning experience.

- 1 Knowledge
- 2 Comprehension
- 3 Application
- 4 Analysis
- 5 Synthesis
- 6 Evaluation

The higher-numbered classes require an integration of concepts and skills that are objectives of the earlier classes. In terms of Bloom's Taxonomy, a *threshold* of this activity from lower to higher level cognitive skills lies in the transition from *Application*, where concepts are employed to solve problems in new situations to *Analysis* which includes the breaking down of informational materials into their component parts, and then understanding the individual parts along with the relationships between them. It is one of the functions of the Baccalaureate Core to drive students to the higher classes in the taxonomy.

The Baccalaureate Core is composed of the following main areas of course study, which comprise a total of 48 credits plus a Writing Intensive Course (WIC courses must be at least three credits and a requirement of the major):

- Skills Courses (primarily first year)
- Perspectives Courses (primarily lower division)
- Difference, Power, and Discrimination (DPD) Courses (upper and lower division)
- Synthesis Courses (upper division)

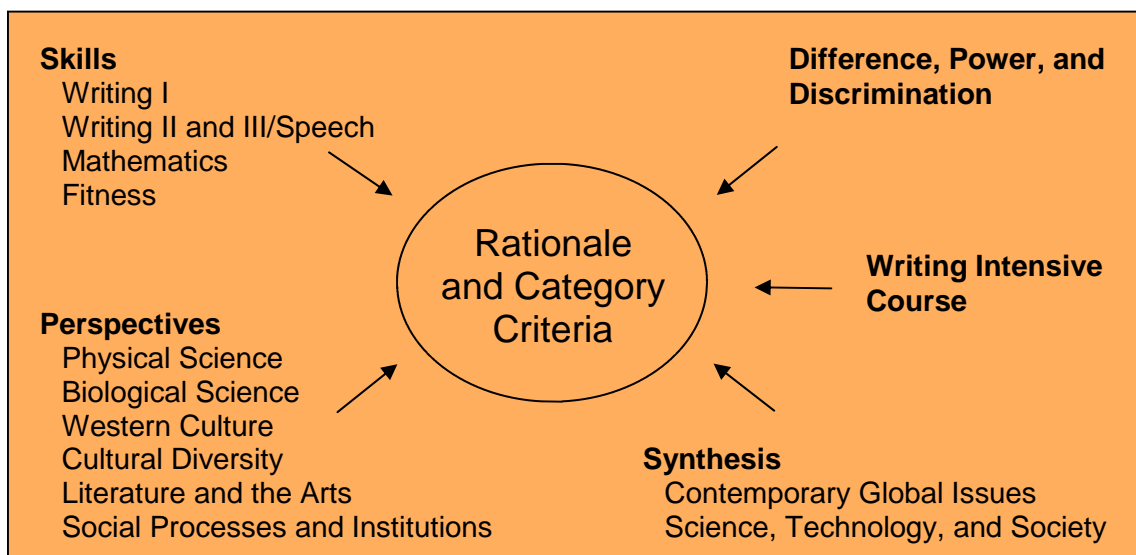
Bloom, B.S., et al., Eds., 1956. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. New York: David McKay Company.

As shown in the figure below, each of the Baccalaureate Core categories has a general rationale as well as specific category criteria that can be found at:

<http://oregonstate.edu/ap/curriculum/baccore.html>

OSU Baccalaureate Core Categories

Each Category Has a Rationale and Specifically Defined Category Criteria



Inspection of the category criteria shows a design that is intended to drive learning to higher cognitive levels. For example, common threads across many of the categories include "Study, from a historical perspective ...", "Demonstrate interrelationships and connections with other subject areas," and "Emphasize elements of critical thinking".

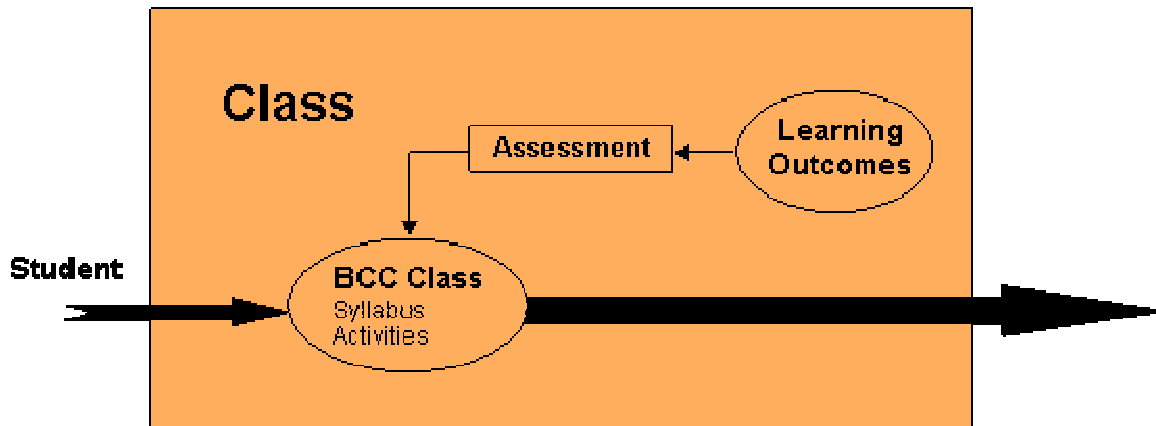
An assessment process is in place to ensure students are achieving outcomes consistent with the intent of the Baccalaureate Core. The assessment process is based on evaluations at two levels: individual course assessment and category reviews.

Assessment at the individual course level is schematically illustrated in the figure below. Each course is constructed of individual elements to promote student learning. The effect of these elements is compared to a set of learning outcomes in assessment of the course. This process is typical of that used for all University courses.

On top of the individual course assessment, each category in the Baccalaureate Core undergoes periodic review by the Baccalaureate Core Committee (BCC). For example, during the 2005-06 academic year, the BCC is reviewing all Contemporary Global Issues courses that

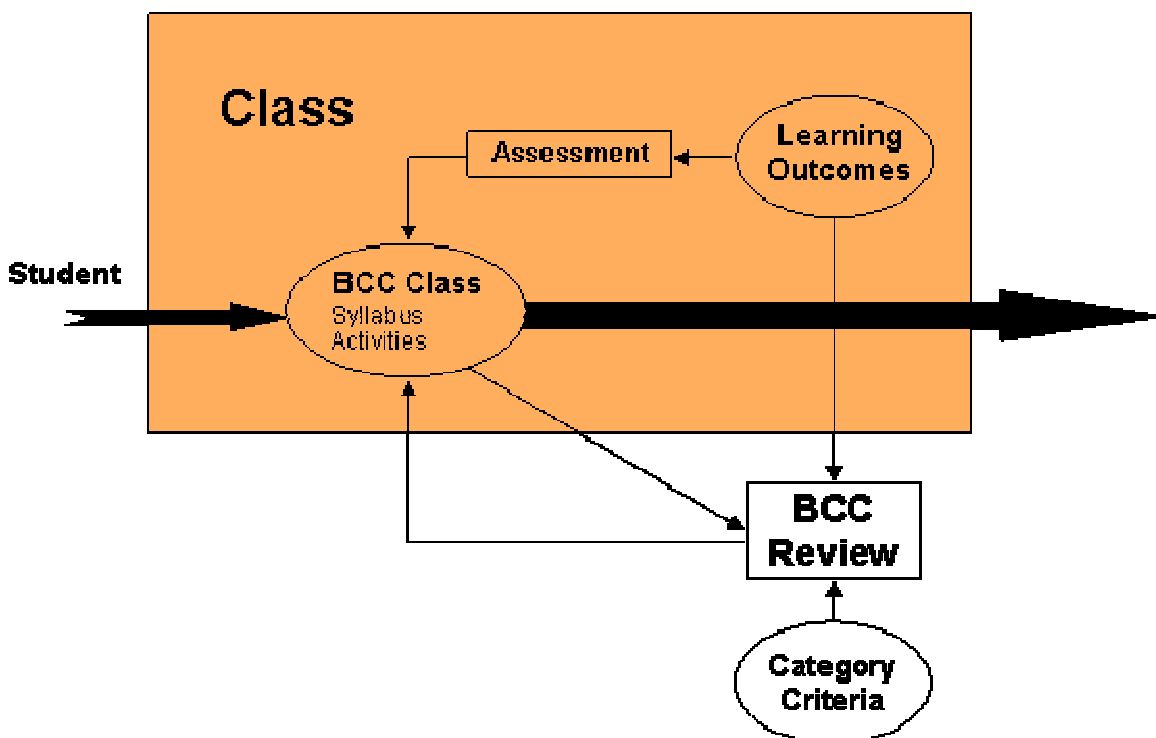
are more than five years old. This additional level of assessment at the individual course level and at the

Assessment at the Individual Course Level



category level is illustrated in the figure below. In this process, the course syllabus and learning outcomes are compared to the category rationale and criteria. Additionally, instructors write a narrative in which they describe specifically how their course addresses the category rationale and meets the category criteria. The purpose is to ensure that Baccalaureate Core criteria

Assessment at the Individual Course Level and at the Category Level



continue to be addressed in these courses. A review rubric is used by the BCC to maintain consistency of evaluation. Only courses that successfully complete the review process retain their category status in the Baccalaureate Core.

The next steps in assessing the quality of the Baccalaureate Core from a learning perspective will require a focused effort at both the course and University levels.

Improve Categorical Review

- Develop a procedure for incorporating how individual courses have met stated course learning outcomes.

Examine the Baccalaureate Core Experience

- Articulate learning outcomes for the Baccalaureate Core experience.
 - Develop an assessment strategy and a structure for continuous improvement to ensure outcomes are being met.
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