

## University Studies Advisory Committee Proposals 13 September 2011

The USAC presents to the Faculty Senate the following proposals for the implementation of the final two components of the new University Studies curriculum: Explorations Beyond the Classroom and Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters. The Faculty Senate will be asked to give their final approval of the specific Explorations experiences and Clustered courses after the committee reviews departments' submissions. We have appended a full report that outlines the Committee's implementation plan for these components.

### I. Explorations Beyond the Classroom

#### A. Where the Senate-approved document reads

“Each student will be required to participate in at least one of the following and earn at least 6 total hours (that may be double counted in other components of University Studies or in the major)” [excerpted from Pages 15-16],

and

“While a total of 6 hours is required here, completion of at least 3 hours in an option above would be noted on the student transcript (each 3 hours completed in additional options would be similarly acknowledged).” [excerpted from Pages 15-16]

the committee proposes,

“Each student will be required to complete one approved experience (that may be double counted in other components of University Studies or in the major).”

and

“The completion of one approved experience is required here. This fulfillment of this requirement would be noted on the student transcript, as would any additional experiences.”

**RATIONALE:** The committee proposes these changes in response to the wide variety of experiences departments are already offering students. If departments can demonstrate how the no- or low-credit bearing experiences they offer satisfactorily address EBC SLOs, then their experiences will be listed under the heading of “approved experiences.” The committee anticipates building upon the foundations provided by this list of “approved experiences” as the university community begins to understand the potential of the new curriculum. At the same time, the committee wants to acknowledge when students undertake additional Explorations experiences.

#### B. Where the Senate-approved document reads

*Discovery* – These options are generally credit-bearing projects that involve close work with a faculty mentor and most frequently take the form of a Directed Individual Study (DIS) project.

*Application* – These options involve work outside the classroom in a variety of applied settings, including internships, fieldwork, practicum, and student-teaching.

*Regional Engagement* – These options include other community-based learning projects that may not currently result in academic credit, but represent substantial

opportunities for students to gain direct experience with issues they have encountered in coursework. A culminating paper could be added and appropriate academic credit delivered via a mechanism similar to our current DIS model.

*Exploration Abroad* – The options include all education abroad options approved by the *Office of International Programs*” [excerpted from Pages 15-16], the committee proposes,

*“Discovery:* These options are generally credit-bearing research or creative projects that involve close work with a faculty mentor; they frequently take the form of a Directed Individual Study (DIS) or Honors project.

*Application:* These options involve applying content knowledge and skills to real-world problems, often taking the form of work with a professional outside the classroom in a variety of traditional applied settings, including internships, fieldwork, practicum, and student-teaching.

*Regional Engagement:* These options include course-embedded service learning projects with community-based organizations (profit or non-profit) that may not currently result in academic credit but represent substantial opportunities for students to gain direct experience with issues they have encountered in coursework.

*Exploration Away:* These options include all education exchange and abroad options approved by the *National Student Exchange Program* or the *Office of International Programs.*”

RATIONALE: The committee proposes these changes in order to assist departments in categorizing the experiences they offer.

- C. The committee proposes three Student Learning Outcomes for EBC<sup>1</sup>:
- EBC1. Students will be able to articulate their expectations, the purpose, and/or the goals of the experience in terms of their personal educational development.
  - EBC2. Students will synthesize knowledge drawn from their coursework to address the issues/challenges/questions involved in the experience.
  - EBC 3. Students will be able to communicate the impact or significance on their personal educational development *and* on others in the profession or in the field at the *conclusion* of the experience.

## II. Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters

- A. The committee proposes a two step “propose and populate” process for the construction of Clusters.
1. Propose
 

One or more Faculty members recognize that several courses across departments have common themes (e.g., Evolution, Ethical Perspectives, Jazz Age, Climate Change,

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<sup>1</sup> Please see appended “Mock-Up of EBC Submission Form” for the mechanism faculty will use to address these SLOs. This submission form mirrors exactly—save the specific SLOs—the other submission forms used by the USAC.

Cognitive Science).<sup>2</sup> There can be an unlimited number of courses in any one Cluster; students are required to take only three.

These Faculty then contact the Faculty members in the other departments and discuss whether a Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster is appropriate and what the rationale behind the cluster would be.

In collaboration, the Faculty members create Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) from guidelines provided by the USAC [appended] that would be shared by the courses in the Cluster. (Of course, each of the courses may also have SLOs that are not shared.)

Together, the Faculty members complete a *New Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster* application [appended] which lists

- a. The rationale behind the Cluster theme.
- b. The common SLOs, derived from above-mentioned guidelines that all courses in the Cluster share.
- c. List of Courses that *could* be included (at least three from Foundations and/or Approaches and Perspectives).
- d. Approval of the Chairs of the Departments initializing the application.

The University Studies Advisory Committee receives, evaluates, and approves the proposed Cluster themes or returns applications for revision.

## 2. Populate

Once a Cluster Theme is created, Faculty will submit single course proposals, via their Chairs, using a Cluster-specific submission mechanism, the *Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Inclusion* form [appended].<sup>3</sup> If other Faculty members identify a course that might be appropriate for inclusion in a Cluster, including courses in the Common Requirements Components of University Studies (ie Capstone, Information Literacy, Writing Intensive, Quantitative and Logical Reasoning) or in the major, they may also submit a *Cluster Inclusion* form. A properly completed form lists

- a. The rationale behind why the course should be included in the Cluster.
- b. How the Cluster SLOs are addressed in the course.
- c. A sample syllabus for the course which explicitly illustrates the course SLOs and highlights the common SLOs.

The application must be signed by the respective Department Chair and submitted to the University Studies Advisory Committee for evaluation and approval.

## B. Where the Senate-approved document reads

“A trio of thematically-related courses from Foundations and/or Approaches and Perspectives” [excerpted from Page 5],

the committee proposes,

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<sup>2</sup> The USAC will provide to Faculty via Dept Chairs the lists of Foundations and Approaches & Perspectives courses that can be included in Clusters.

<sup>3</sup> This *Cluster Inclusion* submission form will mirror exactly—save the specific SLOs—the other submission forms used by the USAC. Again, the Faculty Senate will, of course, have final approval of the content of each cluster.

“A trio of thematically-related courses (at least three from Foundations and/or Approaches and Perspectives) *if they satisfactorily address the Cluster’s SLOs.*”

RATIONALE: The committee proposes these changes so that Clusters can include courses from other areas of University Studies and from within the majors themselves.

C. Where the Senate-approved document reads

“The components described above and the required *Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters* will require that students, in consultation with their academic advisors, articulate an academic plan and make course choices designed to follow that path” [excerpted from Pages 12-13],

the committee proposes,

“The components described above and the required *Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters* will require that students, in consultation with their academic advisors, articulate an academic plan and make course choices designed to follow that path, including filing an official *Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Declaration* through the Registrar’s Office.”

and

To facilitate these choices, the committee proposes the implementation of the *Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Declaration* form for students [appended].

RATIONALE: The committee proposes these changes to encourage students to be more deliberate in their course selection and to facilitate the tracking of students’ chosen academic paths through their audits.

## University Studies: Explorations Beyond the Classroom

### EBC IN THE SENATE-APPROVED DOCUMENT

The Faculty Senate approved the inclusion of Explorations Beyond the Classroom in the new University Studies Curriculum on 17 March 2009. (The full text of the “Revising General Education at UNCW” Report can be found here: <http://uncw.edu/universitystudies/documents/Univ.StudiesCurriculumReport.pdf>). The following is the language about Explorations approved by the Senate:

**Explorations Beyond the Classroom (6 hours from any of the options below – may be integrated into the major or any of the other components of University Studies)**

- *Discovery (mentored research or creative work that engages students in active discovery processes)*
- *Application (fieldwork, practicum, student-teaching, or other credit-bearing work in an applied setting)*
- *Regional Engagement (an approved leadership or service-learning experience)*
- *Exploration Abroad (an approved education abroad experience)* [excerpted from Page 5]

We also hope to acknowledge the substantial work done by our students outside of traditional classroom settings in *Explorations Beyond The Classroom*. Here students will receive a notation on the transcript for participation in a variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities that help students integrate ideas learned in the classroom with real-world experiences. Again our hope is that most students will fulfill this requirement with work they already elect to do. [excerpted from Page 7]

**B. Explorations Beyond the Classroom (6 hours from any of the options below – may be integrated into the major or any of the other components for multiple counting)**

In a series of recent publications, the AAC&U, in its role as “catalyst and facilitator,” has carefully gathered information about educational practices that institutions have found to be effective at advancing essential learning outcomes. Both Freshman Seminars and Capstone courses are among this group of effective practices and would be required in this plan. We propose that UNCW students also be required to engage in one additional “high-impact practice.” Many of our students already take part in programs of this sort outside the traditional classroom. For example, large numbers of student projects under close faculty supervision have long been a hallmark at UNCW, the number of students engaged in various co-curricular experiential learning programs is exploding (to over 6,000 students in 2007-2008), and the percentage of students that study abroad is also expanding rapidly (with goals of 20% of undergraduates by 2010 and 25% by 2015).

We hope to provide a framework that will allow students to understand these options and help them to make intentional choices to complement their educational and vocational goals. Some of the options described below are already required for some

majors and each is currently utilized by a substantial minority of our students. In many circumstances students will fulfill this requirement as part of a major or minor or by integrating it into other components of University Studies.

Each student will be required to participate in at least one of the following and earn at least 6 total hours (that may be double counted in other components of University Studies or in the major):

*Discovery* – These options are generally credit-bearing projects that involve close work with a faculty mentor and most frequently take the form of a Directed Individual Study (DIS) project.

*Application* – These options involve work outside the classroom in a variety of applied settings, including internships, fieldwork, practicum, and student-teaching.

*Regional Engagement* – These options include other community-based learning projects that may not currently result in academic credit, but represent substantial opportunities for students to gain direct experience with issues they have encountered in coursework. A culminating paper could be added and appropriate academic credit delivered via a mechanism similar to our current DIS model.

*Exploration Abroad* – The options include all education abroad options approved by the *Office of International Programs*.

While a total of 6 hours is required here, completion of at least 3 hours in an option above would be noted on the student transcript (each 3 hours completed in additional options would be similarly acknowledged). [excerpted from Pages 15-16]

## USAC PROPOSALS

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RATIONALE: The committee proposes these changes in order to assist departments in categorizing the experiences they offer.

C. The committee proposes three Student Learning Outcomes for EBC<sup>1</sup>:

EBC1. Students will be able to articulate their expectations, the purpose, and/or the goals of the experience in terms of their personal educational development.

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- the issues/challenges/questions involved in the experience.
- EBC 3. Students will be able to communicate the impact or significance on their personal educational development *and* on others in the profession or in the field at the *conclusion* of the experience.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### Protocol for Submitting Explorations Beyond the Classroom

1. Departments will submit the Explorations experiences via the specified component form [appended], along with the standard cover form and a sample syllabus, if applicable. This process mirrors precisely how departments have submitted other courses to University Studies.

## EXPECTATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH EXPLORATIONS

### For USAC:

1. In consultation with the appropriate bodies and committees, the USAC will undertake the revision of DIS and Internship forms to standardize and integrate SLOs as part of the forms themselves.

### For Department Chairs:

1. Chairs insure that their department's curriculum includes course designations for the experiences they submit.

### For Faculty:

1. Faculty who supervise DISs and/or Honors projects or lead courses that include travel agree to incorporate an assignment (likely the culminating project) that addresses the component SLOs.
2. Faculty agree to include experience-specific SLOs on syllabi, if applicable.
3. In addition to submitting a proposal to OIP, Faculty who intend to conduct a non-recurring travel course will submit an EBC proposal to the committee in advance of the course's appearance on SeaNet (likely when departments schedule courses for the upcoming academic year). These Faculty will also work closely with OIP to track all students' study away experiences.
4. If their course is tapped for assessment purposes, Faculty agree to collect and preserve the assignment(s) that address the experience-specific SLOs.

### For OIP:



1. OIP will incorporate/alert students to SLOs and how experience will address them in the study abroad application form.
2. OIP may develop any other add'l measures to facilitate the tracking and successful completion of students' education-related travel as an Explorations experience.

For National Student Exchange Coordinator:

1. The UNCW chapter of the NSE will incorporate/alert students to SLOs and how experience will address them in the NSE application form.
2. NSE may develop any other add'l measures to facilitate the tracking and successful completion of students' education-related travel as an Explorations experience.

For the Honors College:

1. The Honors College will incorporate/alert students to SLOS and how departmental honors projects will address them in the departmental honors forms.
2. The Honors College may develop add'l measures to facilitate the tracking and successful completion of departmental honors as an Explorations experience.

For Registrar:

1. The Registrar's Office will construct the audit so that it will indicate what Explorations experiences the student has completed by subcategory so as to indicate the range of student involvement.
2. The Registrar's Office will provide assistance to the USAC in the revision of general DIS and Internship forms so that they incorporate/alert students to SLOs and how experience will address them.
3. SeaNet will include a sort function that will allow students to identify Explorations experience(s) being offered any given semester (perhaps under the 'attribute type' category).

For ITSD:

1. ITSD will provide assistance in the development of an e-portfolio system to facilitate the inclusion of select experiences, such as study away, in Explorations.

## ASSESSMENT

The committee proposes that the Faculty Senate approve the following assessment plan:

1. The Director of General Education Assessment will tap a selection of courses/experiences included in EBC when the assessment cycle rotates to this component. Faculty or administrators teaching these courses/supervising these experiences will be apprised by the Director of GEA of their courses'/experiences' inclusion in the assessment for that year.

2. These Faculty will collect and preserve copies of the assignment (along with a description of the assignment itself) designed to address the experience-specific SLOs. For Explorations not directly supervised by Faculty, such as those experiences under the 'Study Away' subcategory, students will deposit their work into an e-portfolio. The respective applications for these experiences will prompt students to address the experience-specific SLOs in their application essays or other project.
3. Faculty who volunteer to conduct the assessment will review all the collected artifacts from that class to see whether the students do indeed demonstrate EBC's SLOs.

### TIMELINE

The USAC will issue a call for Explorations experiences immediately after the Senate approves the committee's recommendations. Throughout the fall 2011 semester, the committee will review proposal submissions with the goal of having Explorations subcategories populated and catalogue copy prepared by the November deadline.

**University Studies: Explorations Beyond the Classroom  
Mock-Up of EBC submission form**



**University Studies Component Form: Explorations Beyond the Classroom**

**I. Rationale**

Please provide a rationale for the experience which explains how the experience being proposed fits into this component based on the component's description. For your convenience, the overall description and rationale for this component are included below.

**Overall Description and Rationale for Explorations Beyond the Classroom**

In a series of recent publications, the AAC& U has gathered extensive information about educational practices that institutions have found to be effective at advancing essential learning outcomes. Many of our students already take part in programs of this sort outside the traditional classroom (i.e., DIS, internship, study abroad). Thus UNCW students should engage in one additional “high-impact practice.”

The EBC component of University Studies provides the framework that will allow students to understand these practices and help them to make intentional choices to complement their educational and vocational goals. Each student will be required to complete one approved experience (that may be double counted in other components of University Studies or in the major).

**Definitions:**

*Discovery:* These options are generally credit-bearing research or creative projects that involve close work with a faculty mentor; they frequently take the form of a Directed individual Study (DIS) or Honors project.

*Application:* These options involve applying content knowledge and skills to real-world problems, often taking the form of work with a professional outside the classroom in a variety of traditional applied settings, including internships, fieldwork, practicum, and student-teaching.

*Regional Engagement:* These options include course-embedded service learning projects with community-based organizations (profit or non-profit) that may not currently result in academic credit, but represent substantial opportunities for students to gain direct experience with issues they have encountered in coursework.

*Exploration Away:* These options include all education exchange and abroad options approved by the *National Student Exchange Program* or the *Office of International Programs*.

**Brief Statement of Rationale for Course's Inclusion in EBC**

(Please include emphasis: discovery, application, regional engagement, or exploration away.)

**II. Common Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

Each experience must address all of the Common Student Learning Outcomes for the component, and list these Common SLOs along with experience-specific SLOs in the model course syllabus (if applicable). For each Common SLO, list the experience SLOs that address the common SLO, describe the opportunities which will be provided for students to learn the outcome (readings, class discussion and/or activities, applied projects), and list the means of assessment (exams, papers, projects, quizzes, etc.) that will be used to determine the level of student understanding.

**EBC1. Students will be able to articulate their expectations, the purpose, and/or the goals of the experience in terms of their personal educational development.**

**Experience SLO(s) to Address EBC1**

**Opportunities for Student Learning**

(e.g. attending an orientation, visiting site, reading, researching, discussing, listening, etc.)

**Means of Assessing Course SLO(s)**

(e.g. application essay, letters, project/experience proposal, etc.)

**EBC2. Students will synthesize knowledge drawn from their coursework to address the issues/challenges/questions involved in the experience.**

**Experience SLO(s) to Address EBC2**

**Opportunities for Student Learning**

(e.g. participating/practicing, reading, researching, discussing, listening, observing, etc.)

**Means of Assessing Course SLO(s)**

(e.g. reports, papers, projects, etc.)

**EBC 3. Students will be able to communicate the impact or significance on their personal educational development *and* on others in the profession or in the field at the *conclusion* of the experience.**

**Experience SLO(s) to Address EBC3**

**Opportunities for Student Learning**

(e.g. participating in experience, reading, researching, discussing, listening, viewing, etc.)

**Means of Assessing Course SLO(s)**

(e.g. presentations, poster sessions, reports, papers, projects, etc.)

Please submit cover form, all component forms, a model syllabus (if applicable), and College/School's course action form (if needed) to your department chair. Department chairs should then submit these forms, syllabus (if applicable), and course action form (if needed) in one email message to [universitystudies@uncw.edu](mailto:universitystudies@uncw.edu) from their UNCW email address.

## University Studies: Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters

### TTC IN THE SENATE-APPROVED DOCUMENT

The Faculty Senate approved the inclusion of Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters in the new University Studies Curriculum on 17 March 2009 (The full text of the “Revising General Education at UNCW” Report can be found here: <http://uncw.edu/universitystudies/documents/Univ.StudiesCurriculumReport.pdf>). The following is the language about Clusters approved by the Senate:

#### **Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters (9 hours – all courses eligible for multiple counting)**

- *A trio of thematically-related courses from Foundations and/or Approaches and Perspectives [excerpted from Page 5]*

The third *Core* element, *Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters*, represents an effort to emphasize integrative learning by allowing students to investigate a common theme through multiple disciplinary lenses. The topics of these clusters will need to be developed via a collaborative faculty process. [excerpted from Page 7]

#### **C. Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters (at least 9 hours and three courses; all courses may be eligible for multiple counting)**

Preparation for effective citizenship today requires the ability to recognize multiple competing and complementary viewpoints and to understand that solutions to many modern problems and issues depend on successful integration of multiple viewpoints (Huber et al., 2007). By completing three thematically-related courses in the *Core*, students will engage in the type of cross-disciplinary study that will help them learn to seek creative solutions to difficulties they will encounter when dealing with the complex problems that shape our modern world.

The components described above and the required *Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters* will require that students, in consultation with their academic advisors, articulate an academic plan and make course choices designed to follow that path. By selecting courses that address elements of a theme from different disciplinary perspectives, students will be more likely to show greater gains in critical thinking skills than they would by taking an equivalent number of courses within a single discipline (Bok, 2006, page 138). Each three-course *Cluster* will explore an idea from three different perspectives and will provide students with the opportunity to integrate the methods and findings of different disciplines.

The themes that will be available to students will need to be developed by collaborative faculty efforts across departments. Some campuses that use a similar curricular option have chosen to explore a series of “big questions” important to all of humanity (e.g., *Global Warming, War, Poverty*). Others have opted for a variety of themes of more local interest (e.g., *Coastal Life, Southern Culture*). Many successful programs of this type include a combination of large and local themes that reflect faculty and student interests. Critical factors for the success of such a plan will include faculty

interest, input, and collaboration. Funds for faculty development will also be essential here.

[All three courses in a *Theme* can be double-counted with other components in the student's program of study. Successful completion of a minor may be substituted for this requirement.] [excerpted from Pages 12-13]

## USAC PROPOSALS

A. The committee proposes a two step “propose and populate” process for the construction of Clusters.

### 1. Propose

One or more Faculty members recognize that several courses across departments have common themes (e.g., Evolution, Ethical Perspectives, Jazz Age, Climate Change, Cognitive Science).<sup>1</sup> There can be an unlimited number of courses in any one Cluster; students are required to take only three.

These Faculty then contact the Faculty members in the other departments and discuss whether a Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster is appropriate and what the rationale behind the cluster would be.

In collaboration, the Faculty members create Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) from guidelines provided by the USAC [appended] that would be shared by the courses in the Cluster. (Of course, each of the courses may also have SLOs that are not shared.)

Together, the Faculty members complete a *New Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster* application [appended] which lists

- a. The rationale behind the Cluster theme.
- b. The common SLOs, derived from above-mentioned guidelines that all courses in the Cluster share.
- c. List of Courses that *could* be included (at least three from Foundations and/or Approaches and Perspectives).
- d. Approval of the Chairs of the Departments initializing the application.

The University Studies Advisory Committee receives, evaluates, and approves the proposed Cluster themes or returns applications for revision.

### 2. Populate

Once a Cluster Theme is created, Faculty will submit single course proposals, via their Chairs, using a Cluster-specific submission mechanism, the *Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Inclusion* form [appended].<sup>2</sup> If other Faculty members identify a course that might be appropriate for inclusion in a Cluster, including courses in the Common Requirements Components of University Studies (ie Capstone, Information Literacy, Writing Intensive, Quantitative and Logical

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Reasoning) or in the major, they may also submit a *Cluster Inclusion* form. A properly completed form lists

- a. The rationale behind why the course should be included in the Cluster.
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- c. A sample syllabus for the course which explicitly illustrates the course SLOs and highlights the common SLOs.

The application must be signed by the respective Department Chair and submitted to the University Studies Advisory Committee for evaluation and approval.

B. Where the Senate-approved document reads

“A trio of thematically-related courses from Foundations and/or Approaches and Perspectives” [excerpted from Page 5],

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RATIONALE: The committee proposes these changes so that Clusters can include courses from other areas of University Studies and from within the majors themselves.

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To facilitate these choices, the committee proposes the implementation of the *Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Declaration* form for students [appended].

RATIONALE: The committee proposes these changes to encourage students to be more deliberate in their course selection and to facilitate the tracking of students’ chosen academic paths through their audits.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### Protocol for Creating Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters

The motivation for Faculty and Department Chairs to create Interdisciplinary Clusters arises from a number of considerations.

1. The Faculty Senate has already recognized and approved the benefit students can gain from participating in Transdisciplinary Cluster studies.
2. Faculty themselves benefit from participating in Clusters as they will have students with

greater background and context in those topic areas. For instance, a student taking a Jazz Age Music course will have substantially more context if they have already taken a course in Jazz Age Literature (and vice versa). Students who bring this background knowledge into the classroom will enhance and enliven the experience for themselves, for other students, and for the instructor.

3. Courses that are included in a Cluster may get a second look by students looking to complete a Cluster. Courses with traditionally low enrollments may get a boost by being part of a Cluster.

#### For Faculty: A Two Step Process: Propose and Populate

1. Propose

One or more Faculty members recognize that several courses across departments have common themes (e.g., Evolution, Ethical Perspectives, Jazz Age, Climate Change, Cognitive Science).<sup>3</sup> There can be an unlimited number of courses in any one Cluster; students are required to take only three.

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The University Studies Advisory Committee receives, evaluates, and approves the proposed Cluster themes or returns applications for revision.

2. Populate

Once a Cluster Theme is created, Faculty will submit single course proposals, via their Chairs, using a Cluster-specific submission mechanism, the *Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Inclusion* form [appended]. If other Faculty members identify a course that might be appropriate for inclusion in a Cluster, including courses in the Common Requirements Components of University Studies (ie Capstone, Information Literacy, Writing Intensive, Quantitative and Logical Reasoning) or in the major, they may also submit a *Cluster Inclusion* form. A properly completed form lists

- a. The rationale behind why the course should be included in the Cluster.
- b. How the Cluster SLOs are addressed in the course.

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<sup>3</sup> The USAC will provide to Faculty via Dept Chairs the lists of Foundations and Approaches & Perspectives courses that can be included in Clusters.

- c. A sample syllabus for the course which explicitly illustrates the course SLOs and highlights the common SLOs.

The application must be signed by the respective Department Chair and submitted to the University Studies Advisory Committee for evaluation and approval.

For Students: A Declaration of Intent

1. In consultation with their advisors, students must explicitly register to complete a Cluster through the Registrar's Office by filing a *Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Declaration* application [appended]. Students can file and revise their applications at any point in their academic careers. This application lists which Cluster the student intends to complete. At least two of the three courses must have different course prefixes.

EXPECTATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH CLUSTER APPROVAL/COURSE INCLUSION

For Department Chairs:

1. Chairs insure that courses approved for inclusion in a Cluster are offered in regular rotation.
2. Special Topics courses can be included if Chair submits a *Cluster Inclusion* form prior to the start of the academic year during which the special topics course will be offered (likely in January when course planning for the coming academic year takes place).
3. Chairs may issue course substitutions/waivers (forms will be revised to include this ability) that allow a non-Clustered course to count for a given Cluster if that course meets, in the Chair's estimations, the Cluster's stated SLOs (available on USAC's website or in the course catalogue).

For Faculty:

1. Faculty who teach courses included in Clusters agree to address explicitly how their course aligns with the Cluster's stated SLOs.
2. Faculty agree to include course-specific Cluster SLOs on their syllabi.
3. Faculty consider volunteering for the assessment of Clusters when this component comes up in the General Education assessment cycle.
4. As part of the demonstration of how a course fits into a Cluster, Faculty earmark at least one assignment that they will also collect and preserve for assessment purposes (more on assessment below).

For Registrar:

1. The Registrar's Office will program the audit so that it will reflect whether a student has declared a Cluster.
2. Once declared, the Cluster will be tracked on the audit just as other degree requirements currently are.
3. SeaNet will include a sort function that will allow students to identify Cluster-specific courses being offered any given semester (perhaps under the 'attribute type' category).

4. The Registrar's Office will assist in the revision of the substitution waiver form.

### ASSESSMENT

The Committee proposes that the Faculty Senate approve an "embedded" assessment plan for Clusters. Here is the outline for such a plan:

1. The Director of General Education Assessment will tap a selection of courses included in Clusters when the assessment cycle rotates to this component. Faculty teaching these courses will be apprised by the Director of GEA of their courses' inclusion in the assessment for that year.
2. Faculty teaching those tapped courses will collect and preserve copies from ALL students of an assignment (along with a description of the assignment itself) that would allow the students who are enrolled in the Cluster to draw upon their transdisciplinary awareness of the subject at hand to complete the assignment.
3. Faculty who volunteer to conduct the assessment will review all the collected artifacts from that class to see whether the Cluster-enrolled students do indeed demonstrate the Cluster's SLOs.

### TIMELINE

The USAC will issue a call for Cluster themes immediately after the Senate approves the committee's recommendations. Throughout the fall 2011 semester, the committee will work with the Faculty to approve themes and to facilitate the population of these clusters. The committee will have prepared catalogue copy for the Clusters, which will list the themes themselves, outline the component's requirements, and make explicit the students' role in fulfilling these requirements by the November deadline. Subsequently, the committee will have fully populated Clusters, which can then be publicized to students, ready for Senate approval in spring 2012.

## **University Studies: Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters Guidelines for Creation of SLOs**

Once faculty have identified a Cluster Theme, they should collaborate on the articulation of Student Learning Outcomes specific to that Theme. Two to three SLOs are sufficient. Cluster SLOs should be general enough to allow for the inclusion of courses from different departments. Each department that wishes to have its course included in any given Cluster will demonstrate how their specific course speaks to the general SLOs the faculty have articulated.

The following guidelines should help faculty articulate these SLOs:

- What will students know or be able to do upon the completion of the Cluster? At least one SLO should speak to the integrative knowledge students will achieve via the completion of the Cluster.
- What UNCW Learning Goal(s) do/does the Cluster link to? There are eight goals: foundational knowledge, inquiry, information literacy, critical thinking, thoughtful expression, second language, diversity, and global citizenship. Learn more about these goals and find helpful language with which to craft Cluster SLOs here: <http://uncw.edu/assessment/uncwLearningGoals.html>.

**University Studies: Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters**  
**Mock-Up of**  
*New Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Application*



**I. Overall Description and Rationale for Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters**

Please provide a rationale for the proposed Cluster Theme that explains how it emphasizes integrative learning by allowing students to investigate a common theme through multiple disciplinary lenses. While students only need to take three courses under any Cluster heading, the Clusters themselves can contain any number of courses; indeed, the more courses in a Cluster, the better. Each Cluster should prepare students to recognize multiple competing and complementary viewpoints and to understand that solutions to many modern problems and issues depend on successful integration of multiple viewpoints (Huber et al., 2007). By completing any three thematically-related courses in a Cluster, students will engage in the type of cross-disciplinary study that will help them learn to seek creative solutions to difficulties they will encounter when dealing with the complex problems that shape our modern world.


**Brief Statement of Rationale for Proposed Cluster Theme**

**II. Common Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

Please articulate the Cluster's general SLOs. Format them as TTC 1, TTC 2....

**III. List of Courses for *Possible* Inclusion (at least three from Foundations and/or Approaches & Perspectives)**

Please record here the courses that appear as though they could be included in the proposed Cluster Theme. Remember to consult the ‘yes’ and ‘possibly’ lists provided by the Committee. There is no limit to the number of courses that can be included in a Cluster. Indicate with an asterisk (\*) which courses are offered by the Faculty preparing this Application.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for listing courses for possible inclusion in a cluster theme. The box is currently blank.

**IV. Chairs’ Signatures**

Please include signatures from the Chairs of the Departments responsible for the asterisked courses.



**University Studies: Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters**  
**Mock-Up of**  
*Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Inclusion Form*



**I. Rationale**

Please provide a rationale for the course which explains how the course being proposed fits into this Cluster based on the Cluster's description. For your convenience, the overall description and rationale for this component are included below.

**Overall Description and Rationale for Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster in [THEME]**  
[Text here will be taken from the 'rationale' Faculty provide on the New Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Application.]

**Brief Statement of Rationale for Course's Inclusion in [THEME] Cluster**

**II. Common Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

Each course must address all of the Common Student Learning Outcomes for this Cluster and list these Common SLOs along with course-specific SLOs in the model course syllabus (to be attached). For each Common SLO, list the course SLOs that address the common SLO, describe the opportunities which will be provided for students to learn the outcome (readings, class discussion and/or activities, applied projects), and list the means of assessment (exams, papers, projects, quizzes, etc.) that will be used to determine the level of student understanding.

**TTC 1-?. [Text here will be taken from the SLOs provided on *New TTC Application.*]\***

**Course SLO(s) to Address TTC 1**

**Opportunities for Student Learning**

(reading, researching, discussing, listening, viewing, etc.)

**Means of Assessing Course SLO(s)**

(exams, papers, projects, quizzes, etc.)

**\*There will be a page formatted in this manner for each Cluster SLO.**

**Submission instructions:**

Please submit cover form, all component forms, a model syllabus, and College/School's course action form (if needed) to your department chair. Department chairs should then submit these forms, syllabus, and course action form (if needed) in one email message to [universitystudies@uncw.edu](mailto:universitystudies@uncw.edu) from their UNCW email address.

**University Studies: Thematic Transdisciplinary Clusters**  
**Mock-Up of**  
*Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Declaration Application\**



**Thematic Transdisciplinary Cluster Declaration**

Name (Last, First)

Student ID Number

I intend to complete the following Cluster (select from drop down menu):

Please list courses already completed for this Cluster:

If you wish to change your declaration, please notify the Registrar's Office.

Signature

Date

\*Modeled on Wheaton College's form (<http://wheatoncollege.edu/academics/the-wheaton-curriculum/connections/connections-list/>)