

# EXPLORATIONS 2019 ASSESSMENT REPORT

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT PLAN

### Learning Goals

The Learning Goals for Explorations are:

1. To assist first year students in making a successful transition to academic and student life at Hendrix.
2. To assist first year students in developing their capacity to reflect critically on their values, interests, and abilities as related to academic and student life at Hendrix.

These goals were approved by the Working Group at our Assessment Meeting in the Spring of 2017, replacing the goals that had been inherited from a previous iteration of the course.

### Map of Goals to Components

For each of the above goals, we provide the following map to show ways in which we hope to achieve these in the course.

Goal 1: Transition to Life at Hendrix:

Students are required to read the College's *Statement of Purpose* and *Statement on Diversity*. The third meeting day of the course is devoted to discussions of classroom etiquette and the College's *Academic Integrity Policy*. Students are introduced to the Odyssey Learning Goals as well as the General Education requirements toward the end of the semester. Finally, a class meeting is devoted to Social Conduct, where all sections meet with the Dean of Students.

Goal 2: Reflecting on Life at Hendrix:

The curriculum explicitly devotes days to considering what it means to be a Liberal Arts college and to thinking about career and vocation. The Journal Assignment is explicitly designed to ask students to reflect on their experiences as they navigate the new experience of attending Hendrix. We require all in the fourth week that all students complete a Self-Reflection Questionnaire which again explicitly asks the students to think about their process of integrating into the campus.

### Information Gathering

Indirect: Our Student Feedback form that students complete after the end of the semester ask students to rate their own understanding of both the basic factual information about Hendrix (Gen Ed Requirements, for example) as well as whether they have reflected on their experiences during their first semester.

Question	Fall 2018	Fall 2017	Fall 2016
1. Explorations has increased my understanding about how to navigate the Hendrix experience.	4.25	4.14	4.13
2. Explorations has increased my understanding of Hendrix's general education requirements.	4.42	4.36	4.53
3. Explorations has increased my awareness of the resources available on campus.	4.41	4.19	4.25
4. Explorations has helped me to understand what is expected of a Hendrix student, both inside and outside the classroom.	4.28	4.05	4.21
5 Explorations has provided me with tools and resources that I can use to consider my talents and interests and then relate to future career and vocational goals *	4.07	3.91	3.69*
6. Explorations has helped me reflect on what is involved in selecting a major *	4.13	3.85	3.69*
7. Approximately how many times outside of class did you meet (formally or informally) with your Explorations instructor?	3.35	3.29	1.95
11. % of students who indicate they have found a Mentor on Campus	66%	73%	80%
12. % of students who consider their Explorations Instructor a Mentor.	70%	73%	75%

\*\*Note for #5 & 6: In the 2016 version, these two questions were combined into a single question asking “Explorations has helped me reflect on what is involved in vocational discernment (i.e. thinking about what I’m going to do after college) and selecting a major.” The Working Group elected to split these to better understand if there was a significant difference between career and vocation and selecting a major.

Direct: Since the change over to the new Learning Goals, Explorations has not done a good job collecting direct assessment. Though the course is taught from a common syllabus, there are not any truly common assignments, with the exception of the Fourth Week Self Reflection Questionnaire and Advisor check in. (Though all sections are required to do the Journal Assignment and to complete an Odyssey-related assignment, individual faculty have wide latitude in determining the parameters of those.) It is our intention this upcoming year to survey faculty at the completion of the course to see how well their individual sections accomplished the goals.

## ACTION PLAN

The indirect student feedback as well as anecdotal data from faculty indicates that Explorations is in general achieving its goals. However, we need to back this up with more direct evidence. Starting this Fall, we intend to survey each section and determine to what degree each student achieves the goals. Depending on the outcome of that assessment we will:

- If the direct assessment confirms that most students are achieving both goals:
  - We will establish a cycle starting with Goal 1 and focusing on strengthening two or three parts of the supporting curriculum for that goal. Initially, we will look at the Academic Integrity Policy and Social Conduct, their place within our curriculum, and assess whether they specifically add to our students' achievement of Learning Goal 1. We will then continue on this cycle, checking a few parts of the curriculum for Learning Goal 2, then back to Goal 1 as so on. If major weaknesses are discovered, we will slow the process down and spend two or three academic years focusing on them. Otherwise, both indirect and direct assessments will be “held over” as we move on to make sure that we are not losing the progress we have made.
- If the assessment suggests that one goal is being achieved, while one is not:
  - The process in the previous bullet point will be carried out, but with an initial emphasis on the particular Learning Goal under consideration, and with a specific goal of understanding what is missing from the curriculum to allow students to achieve the goal. These aspects will be emphasized in the August Workshops, in the Weekly Reminder emails that go out to all instructors, and at the Spring Explorations Welcome Luncheon. However, we will continue to perform the basic assessment of the other Learning Goal to again make sure that we are not squandering the successes we have built there.
- If the assessment suggests that neither goal is being achieved:
  - In this case, the response will be somewhat similar to that of the first bullet point; however, the Working Group will need to determine which goal needs to be focused on first. Additional time may need to be spent in the August Workshop on the specifics of making sure that students are achieving the goals.

## Explorations Fall 2019 -- Direct Assessment

For this semester, we are specifically using the Journal Assignment to assess learning goal #2:

To assist first year students in developing their capacity to reflect critically on their values, interests, and abilities as related to academic and student life at Hendrix.

We are asking you to assess the level (see below) at which students are developing their capacity to reflect using the **Journal Portfolio** as your evidence.

This rubric is modeled on one used by Sasha Pfau in her Explorations course, and follows the *What? So What? Now What?* flow.

### Explorations Fall 2019 – Journal Portfolio

**Instructor Name:**

**Number of Students:**

For each row, please indicate the number of students in each category, using their Journal as your evidence. We hope that students grew in their Journal writing during the semester, so please evaluate based on where they ended up, not where they may have started.

	Strong	Satisfactory	Needs Growth	Unsatisfactory	NA
<b>What?</b> – identification of values, interests, abilities	Clearly identifies specific values/interests/abilities, providing well-chosen details, which speak to the prompt	Identifies some values/interests/abilities, providing adequate detail but uses generalizations	Identification of values/interests/abilities is surface level, or detail is lacking – or things identified are vague or not related to prompt	Struggles with identification of values/interests/abilities; does not provide any details	
Number					
<b>So What?</b> – relates them to academic & student life	Can clearly articulate how these values/interests/abilities relate to the prompt & their experiences	Makes connections between the values/interests/abilities and the prompt & their experiences but lacks depth of understanding.	Shows limited understanding of how the values/interests/abilities relate to the prompt & their experiences	No attempt to connect to the prompt or their experiences	
Number					
<b>Now What?</b> – reflects critically	Profound reflection about how experiences will impact future decisions	Some reflection about how these experiences will inform future decisions	Perfunctory reflection about how experience will impact future.	Little attempt at reflection, and no connection between the experiences detailed and the future	
Number					