

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE FOR GENERAL EDUCATION

MEETING AGENDA

NOVEMBER 2, 2022

VIA ZOOM: <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/84229621673>

2:30 PM – 3:45 PM

Present: Angela Anderson, Aaron Ansell, Stephen Biscotte, Briana Ermanni, Corinne Guimont, Molly Hall, Earl Kline, Jason Malone, Nicole Pitterson, Annie Ronan, Hannah Shinault, Jeremy Sudweeks, Khanh Ngoc Tran, Zach Underwood, Sparkle Williams

Absent: Aaron Goldstein, Janet Hilder, Victoria Lael

Guests: Jenni Gallagher

Call to order by Hannah Shinault at 2:31 pm

Announcements: S. Biscotte provided an update on resolution [CUSP 2022-23A](#), noting that it is currently at step 7, senate 2nd reading.

1. Special Study Reviews

The committee unanimously approved LAHS 2984: Intro to Queer Studies for Pathways concept 7 (Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the U.S.).

The committee unanimously approved AAD 3984: Intro to Immersive Multimedia for Pathways concept 6a (Critique and Practice in the Arts) with the following modifications:

- Add department head and associate dean signatures to the Request for Special Study form
- Remove SLO #2 from the Pathways Special Study Request form. The committee felt the course does not meet this outcome, and since it's only required to meet a majority of the SLOs, this one can be removed.

2. Pathways Program Revision

The committee discussed the feedback (Appendix A) that was received as of 8:00 am on 10/31/22 in response to the [draft program revision proposal](#). Committee members also shared feedback that they received from their constituents directly.

There was considerable discussion around the concern brought forth by the College of Architecture, Arts, and Design, as articulated in a letter submitted by the director of the School of Visual Arts (Appendix B).

Recognizing the need for more community feedback before discussing if/how to move forward with streamlining the student learning outcomes, the deadline for feedback was extended to November 18. Committee members will solicit additional feedback from their constituencies, emphasizing that no decisions have been made about revisions. The current

proposal is a preliminary draft which may or not may not move forward, or may move forward with significant revisions, depending on the feedback received.

3. Subcommittee Reports

There were no subcommittee reports.

Meeting adjourned by Hannah Shinault at 3:45 pm

Minutes compiled by Jenni Gallagher

Preliminary Feedback on the Pathways Program Revision Draft

October 31, 2022

I. Background

The University Curriculum Committee for General Education (UCCGE) drafted a [proposal](#) for streamlining the Pathways student learning outcomes (SLOs). Committee members shared the preliminary draft with their constituencies and requested feedback through a [Google form](#). Forty-five responses were received, representing five colleges and University Studies.

Please note: This is a preliminary report. We extended the deadline for feedback to Nov. 2 by request. An updated report will be compiled at that time.

II. General Results

Overall, responses to the proposal were divided:

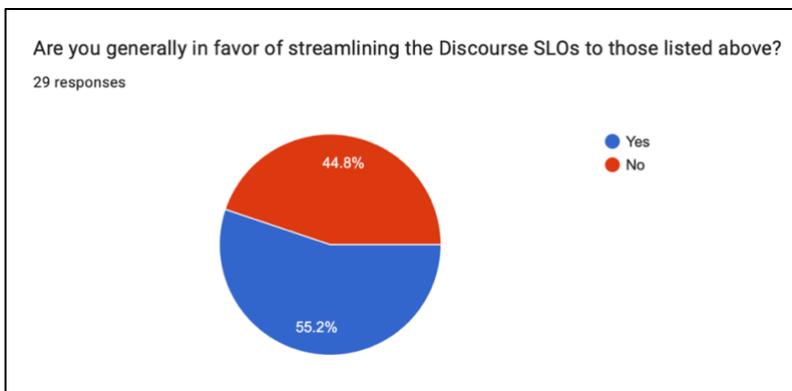
Not in favor	47%
In favor	36%
Mixed support	9%
No strong preference	9%

The table below indicates the percentage of responses received from colleges/units.

College of Architecture, Arts, and Design	60%
College of Engineering	17.8%
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	11.1%
College of Natural Resources and Environment	4.4%
Pamplin College of Business	4.4%
University Studies	2.2%

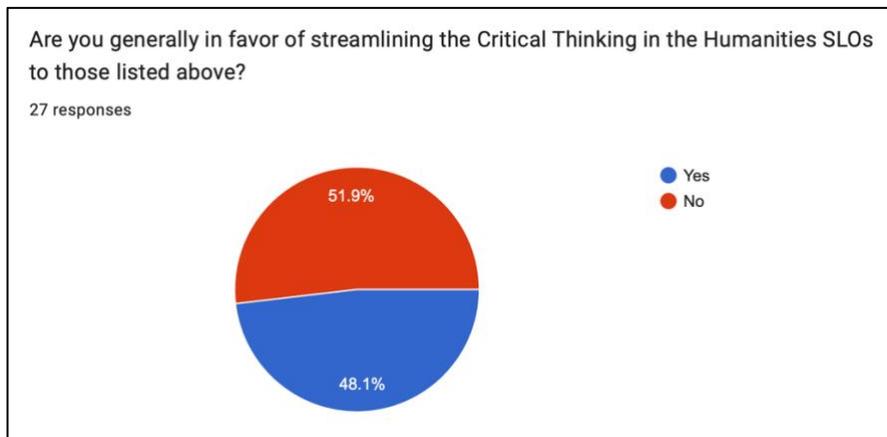
III. Results by Concept

1. Discourse



What additional feedback do you have about the proposed changes for Discourse?
Can we start Beta testing these revisions this semester?
I don't see the point in limiting these assessments. As someone who teaches a large Pathways course in the arts this is especially troubling since these are well applied in this field.
In general, I don't think we should remove any of these criteria.
It will dilute the core of education we are trying to provide students.
Less is more!
Like what is proposed
This change prioritizes assessment over student learning
These SLOs are already very basic as is. Why make our students less competitive after graduation?
Two of the three focus on communication deliverable rather than on development and use of intellectual content. This lessens the courses to emphasis on communication rather than development of discourse and content. The discovery process is lost. It makes sense to me to assess at least three. Again, if people only assess a few, we lose the assessment, particularly if we only assess the same ones each course offering.

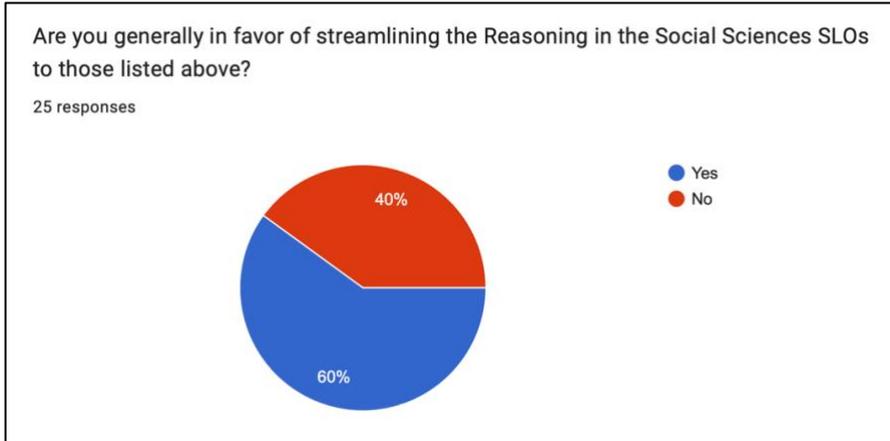
2. Critical Thinking in the Humanities



What additional feedback do you have about the proposed changes for Critical Thinking in the Humanities?
History should remain a key part of this
I don't see the point in limiting these assessments.
I teach a pathways course dedicated to historical understanding of the context of critical ideas, so I don't want this criteria which is crucial to my pathways teaching to disappear. Again, in general, I don't think we should remove any of these criteria.
I think it is crucial for all of our students, especially within our current divisive political environment, to learn how to construct written documents - narratives and arguments- that are based on close and careful analysis of other texts and that are clearly and rationally composed.

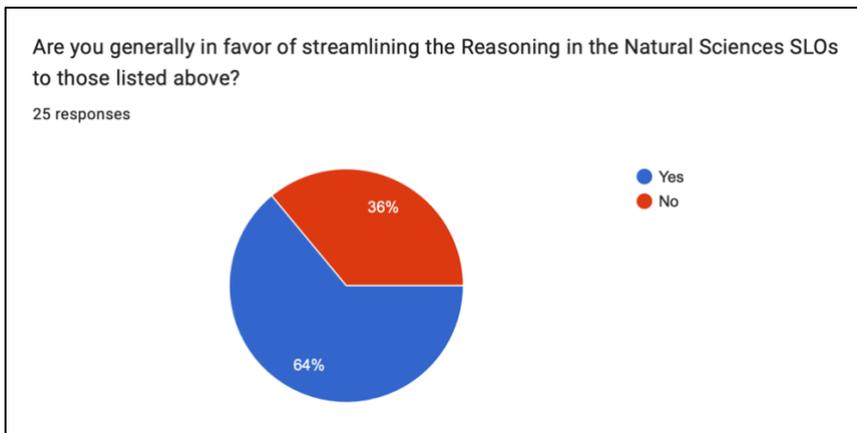
I would strongly advocate for deleting SLO 3 not 4. The first three are all deeply humanities rooted whereas SLO 4 allows for interdisciplinary incorporation of humanities concepts and theories without making it a full humanities course. Further, more people are already measuring #4 than #3 (probably because of the rationale here) and lastly, if you simply remove the word "complex" from #4 then you have satisfied the concern of "above grade-level." If you are not addressing editing language choices, but you are eliminating options because of language choice, then you are create this risk of creating less optimal objective sets.
Less is more!
Like what is proposed
The less we understand how our actions in the past have transformed our world, the more dangerous our world can become.
The proposed change to remove SLO 4 because it “is above the level appropriate for general education” and is “currently only utilized by 67.9% of Humanities courses” is selective. If the decision is data-driven, why was SLO 3 “interpret texts and other created artifacts within multiple historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts” with a lower usage rate of 67.4% not proposed for removal?
the second rationale makes little sense as it is more utilized than the current #3 SLO
This change "dumbs down" the SLOs for the humanities and makes it much easier for non-humanities/STEM faculty to propose humanities outcomes
This proposed change for Critique and Practice in the Arts disproportionately affects courses that are grounded in context; the context outcome is core to a number of Humanities disciplines and eliminating it will affect essential course content and therefore proposals--how can one write a history/ context based course proposal when that outcome no longer applies? Likewise, elevating the outcome related to methods and theories can mean anything--it has no basis necessarily in the core component of history & context, or the Humanities. The way the proposed changes are being framed, any discipline including the science for example could qualify for outcomes in methods and theories, but history/ context based disciplines can never, for example, qualify to meet Quant/Comp outcomes. Therefore this creates a very serious imbalance in how this outcome can be applied and who qualifies for it, unfairly putting the Humanities at a disadvantage especially as the PIBB model is tied to our course enrollments which are driven by Pathways. It further emphasizes the general disregard Virginia Tech seems to have for the Humanities as a hanger on to the core concerns of STEM, which is terrible for morale in disciplines that are already minimized by the university.
It seems like we are being offered something that is already in place, as different outcomes have clearly been crafted (without faculty consultation) and put into place. Considering PIBB implications, instituting major changes to Pathways at this juncture seems incredibly ill-advised. Perhaps Pathways needs more oversight and guidance, and should be merged with UCC again, or faculty senate or another faculty-wide body so that there is a clearer understanding by faculty affected of what is going on, when, and how these changes happen--these changes have just come to light and they seem alarmingly rushed.
Too easy for students

3. Reasoning in the Social Sciences



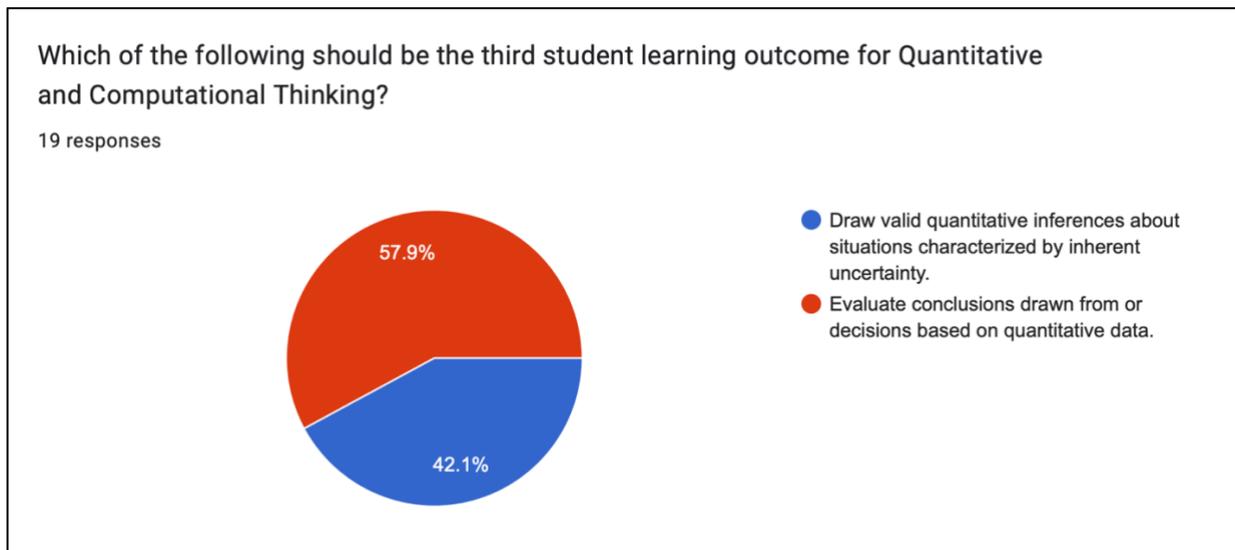
What additional feedback do you have about the proposed changes for Reasoning in the Social Sciences?
I do not think that existing SLO 4 is adequately covered by SLO 2 and 3. Examining and analyzing belief structures, and how these impact culture and society, seems to be an extremely important benefit of social sciences research and education.
I don't think we should remove ANY of these criteria.
Less is more!
Like what is proposed
Makes sense
That fourth SLO is essential to understanding how people work, something that appears to be weakly understood in our current era.
This change prioritizes assessment over student learning
This reasoning is essential to make good design (industrial, architectural, social). Understanding people, their habits, likes, dislikes, actions, etc. is crucial to designing systems that work for everyone.

4. Reasoning in the Natural Sciences



What additional feedback do you have about the proposed changes for Reasoning in the Natural Sciences?
Absolutely not. Taking out the "Evaluate the credibility and the use/misuse of scientific information" SLO is reckless to society. Higher education is exactly where citizens learn to evaluate the credibility and the use/misuse of information. K-12 education is doing a horrible job teaching this. We are seeing countless, very clear examples of the consequences of this - climate change denial, anti-vaxxers, people storming state capitals and threatening violence because they don't have the skills to weed through baloney, elected officials or popular figures with wide-reaching voices telling their constituents and audiences that science is bad... Why on earth would we remove this SLO? To ease our assessment workload?
I believe that the current SLO 3 is an important outcome. We are struggling with issues of evaluation of credible information as a society at this time. Why would we remove at this time?
Less is more!
Like what is proposed
Science and scientific methods have already been dumbed down too much in this country. Why would Virginia Tech want to be a part of this?
This change prioritizes assessment over student learning

5. Quantitative and Computational Thinking

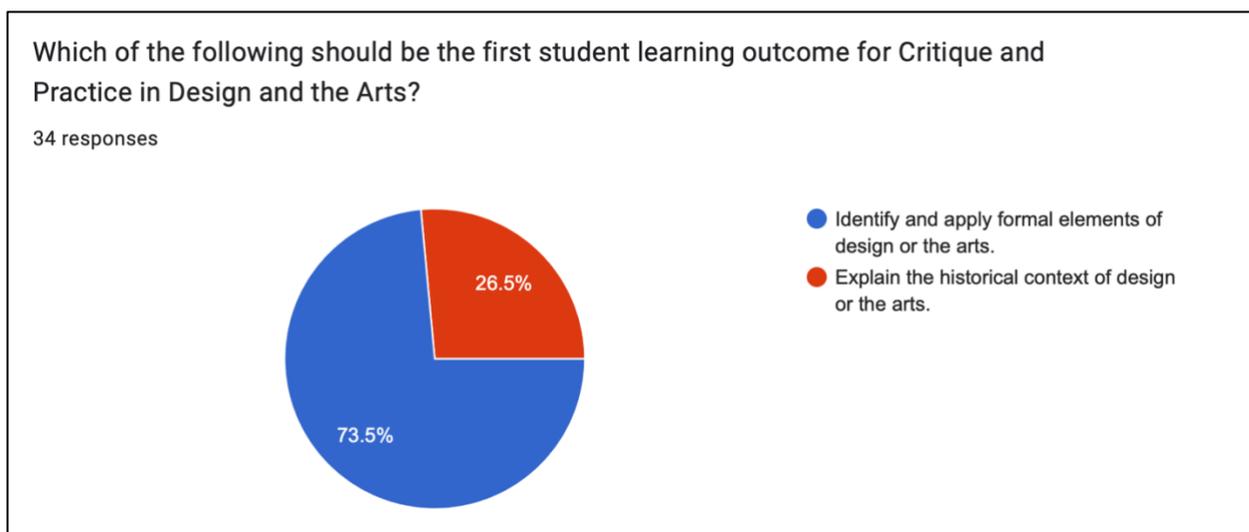


Please briefly justify your choice for the third SLO.
Conclusions could be subject based, the first SLO is broader leaving more room for interpretation as well as variety for non-MATH based classes
Drawing quantitative inferences from uncertain situations seems to be better suited for upper level and/or graduate work.
Drawing valid quantitative inferences is hands-on, developing fluency with concepts and methods.
Evaluate is a higher level SLO, comprising the ability to draw inferences.
I think both of these are good, however, drawing quantitative inferences will have more of an impact in real world settings in my opinion.

I would argue for both. Why force the selection. Drawing conclusions is a skill quite separate from evaluating someone else's conclusions.
More room for practical applications with subsequent assessment of results
No major concern with either of the SLOs to keep. Recommendation is based on what we are currently doing in the class.
not all decisions from quantitative data involve uncertainty and I think that language makes it harder to align assessment measures.
Relates more to typical research process
Second one can be shown for most of our quantitative SLO's, whereas first one by many fewer.
The "Evaluate..." objective seems pretty difficult for general education
The third SLO seems to be a better reflection of scientific literacy, a skill which students (and the general public) need, particularly in an age of information overload related to critical issues (e.g., social media attention to climate change, pandemics, etc.).
This is not my area of expertise, but it seems that option 1 could fall into the broader 2nd SLO
This seems broader
This SLO seems to better aligned to more classes

What additional feedback do you have about the proposed changes for Quantitative and Computational Thinking?
It is preposterous to ask all respondents to weigh in, potentially outvoting the opinions offered by those disciplinary expertise!
It's interesting that we weren't given a choice on don't change on this one.

6. Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts



Please briefly justify your choice for the first SLO.
"Identify and apply formal elements of design or the arts" is the most foundational and of the SLOs. ...But this not the important question. We should be questioning why any should be eliminated.
Again, I argue for both. They are distinctly different and important in developing critical thinking in design and the arts. I suspect that the current use of each relates to the specific focus of an offered course. Removing either could fundamentally change the emphasis and inclusion of materials in the class. While we can say that we don't teach to the test or assessment, we certainly have developed coursework to our intended range of student outcomes. Lose the outcomes and we lose that educational impact.
Allows art history unit to teach classes.
Because teach the SLO for studio arts.
Both of these are integral to a strong arts curriculum, the student should understand the historical context and style of any piece they are looking to replicate (in the case of music). For instance, if a student does not understand Baroque performance practice, they are not able to identify and apply formal elements of musical style to a performance of Bach's music. This is the study of performance practice in the arts.
Drawing communicates ideas and generates ideas simultaneously. Understanding and utilizing formal elements of design makes for more impactful messaging and clear presentation. I believe BOTH of the above outcomes to be very important.
Either one is satisfactory.
elements of design/the arts arise in a historical and cultural context. trying to parse them in this way is non-sensical.
Firstly, I don't believe that the learning outcomes should be streamlined. I am not sure why for this particular area, the option of stating whether you are in favor of the changes or not, was not even offered, as it gives the impression that this is a forgone conclusion, and that you are seeking input only for appearance sake. If forced to choose, I chose the first SLO, simply because it would mean less courses have to be completely altered. However, both are necessary and needed for this Pathways area, as it allows additional important courses to be included in the Pathways curriculum. The historical context of the arts, is vital for understanding and proper interpretation.
For engineering classes, historical context is important, but that's not what we care about assessing. Even the identification of formal elements isn't that important, our main focus is on the application.
For my course, understanding the historical context is a brief part of the work we do, because identification and application of the elements are much more practical and applicable to getting students jobs in the field.
I actually think that both SLO 1 and 2 are necessary. There is no reason why an instructor could not fold historical context into lessons that help students understand formal elements of design and the arts and vice versa.
I don't think we should be choosing between them. We should have them all
I think a fundamental part of Pathways is helping students see how knowledge progresses with time. Being able to identify formal elements of design or the arts is important, but applying design and art concepts is completely different and beyond the scope of a general education course.
I think application is the most important aspect!
I think having the arts in a contextual setting is something that separates a university from a trade school.
I think identifying and applying is slightly more beneficial to the student than explaining historical contexts because of the translation to real world contexts.
I would prefer to have both

Identify is lower on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and leaves more vague opportunities for varying subjects. Not all Design and Arts have historical context in all aspects.
In order to fully contextualize a work of art or design, foundational understanding is important: If the "historical context" SLO is not included, students will be missing a central framework from which to understand the art/design itself and the context from which it was created.
It is good for students to understand the lineage of thoughts process.
It's broader; it could include (but not require) the historical context of formal elements, if the instructor desired.
Leans more into the creative thinking and application that is vital to all disciplines
None of the SLOs should be removed. Both of these Pathways learning outcomes are crucial for students taking SOVA courses. Whether students are enrolled in Foundations, Creative Technology, Studio Art, Graphic Design or Art History courses they benefit from being able to identify and apply formal elements of Design or the Arts. It's equally important that students practicing and studying Art & Design be able to understand and explain the historical context of the Arts and Designs they create. Contemporary Art and Design is not created within an art-historical vacuum. Student need to understand that the practices they engage in when creating or studying are rooted in deep history.
not all courses in this category have historical content built into the curricula and changing this SLO would likely require modifications not just to assessment measures but to course content itself.
One can argue that properly identifying and applying formal elements requires a historical context.
The selection is more relevant to a practical application. (The other choice is better for history/literature courses.)
These are two very different learning outcomes that go hand in hand. One cannot effectively identify and apply formal elements without some explanation of historical context. Rather than eliminating one I would suggest merging the two. However, the word "practice" in the title of concept 6 suggests application, so if I had to choose one I would choose "Identify and apply formal elements of design or the arts" to remain in alignment with Concept 6.
This is my area of expertise. I think if we are streamlining the Pathways concepts, this one should be geared towards practice and application of design and the arts. Explaining historical context feels more in line with the Humanities concept. This seems supported by only 3 classes needing revision if historical context is removed, while 26 courses would need revision if formal elements is removed.
This outcome is a more appropriate fit for the approach we take in our courses currently. It also seems that a course could discuss historical context as part of formal elements of design and the arts, but not as easily vice versa.
This SLO is more inclusive of design in engineering, where the application of current principles is more important than their evolution.
We should not have to choose between the two-- both are integral to SOVA arts courses.

What additional feedback do you have about the proposed changes for Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts?
The act of making/doing is, in essence, the "lab" for arts and design. If this SLO is removed, students will not be exposed to iterative practice.
Asking for feedback on which SLO is preferred misses the mark. "Critique and Practice in the Design and the Arts" - the word 'practice' is right there in the title of Concept 6. We must ensure there is adequate/sufficient {{practice}} required for a course that fulfills this Pathway. I urge the UCCGE to put more weight on the feedback of professors of art and design regarding this SLO, rather than popular opinion inferred from polling results, or data resulting from flawed methodologies.
I am not in favor of the streamlining as it is currently proposed. None of the Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts SLOs should be eliminated. If a streamline is enacted, SLOs should be combined

to maintain strength and meaningfulness. We should not dilute quality SLOs integral to practice-based or art history courses under Pathways.

Here is an example of how this could be managed without diluting the breadth of the SLOs:

1. Identify and apply formal elements, interpretive strategies or methodologies in design or the arts.
2. Explain the historical context of design or the arts.
3. Employ skills, tools, and methods of working TO produce a fully developed work through iterative processes of design or the arts.

I do not feel these changes are an improvement or will lessen the "work load" on faculty for assessment of these courses. It will simply create additional busy work for faculty who have to completely restructure the courses they teach. Reducing the number of SLO's from 3 to 2 is not a significant enough change to create a worthwhile reduction in work load when weighed with the complete disruption of the current courses. If serious about reducing workload for faculty in these assessments, completely remove the requirement of faculty to submit assessments on these SLO's. Since students are taking a course with these learning objectives, it seems reasonable that if a student succeeds in that same course, they are learning and showing competence in the course learning objectives. Additional feedback/assessment from faculty is, therefore, arbitrary and redundant.

I do not support getting rid of the "produce a fully developed work through iterative processes..." outcome. This is integral to most arts classes, so the data here seems to be misleading. This data should not be the only assessment of removing this outcome. There are Pathways arts and music classes that heavily focus on this outcome, and it is an extremely important component to student learning in these classes. Students must have the ability to perform or create art that they deem worthy for an audience to consume (of either peers or a paying public audience to see), this is fundamental to their study.

I don't think we should remove any criteria. All of them are crucial.

I feel strongly that SLO 5 (producing a fully developed work through an iterative process) needs to remain in the SLP for this pathway. I feel that it is high beneficial for all of our students to be able to create an artwork iteratively - by having it critiqued multiple times along the way and improving over multiple sessions; this instills valuable lessons about persistence, patience and daily practice. And most crucially, this SLO helps our students value the process of communicating with an audience of peers by carefully listening to and considering feedback. This allows our students to understanding the value of art works as communicative cultural phenomena.

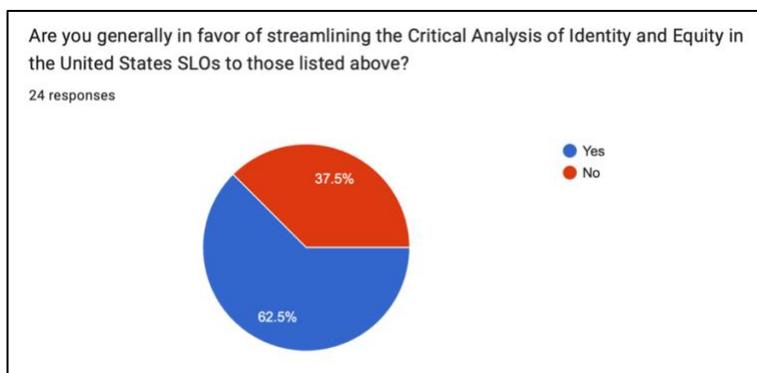
I strongly disagree with the proposal to eliminate SLO 5 (Produce a fully developed work through iterative processes of design or the arts) and the proposal to eliminate SLO 1 or SLO 2. Eliminating these SLOs weakens the overall Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts Concept, and opens opportunity to sideline the design and arts disciplines who teach this concept. It is a false binary to propose that students should understand either historical context or formal elements of design and the arts. To eliminate producing a developed work of design or art is to inherently de-value exactly what design and arts do: they produce work. Producing this work is laborious, both for students and faculty, so it is to be expected that this SLO would be assessed less often. That does not make it any less relevant or essential to the Pathways Concept. If VT does meaningfully see value in the Design and Arts, it should not water down the related Pathways Concept. If it is necessary to streamline 5 SLOs to 3, the 3 need to be re-written to integrate the objectives currently embedded in the 5.

I teach my students to draw and understand drawing so they will be the person in meetings in the future making drawings. The person in meetings making the drawing will own that meeting, push their ideas forward, get the promotions, and have a better chance of eventually running their own business. My students learn that a picture is worth more than 1000 words.

I teach the two largest Pathways courses at VT, so I have a lot of experience with student engagement in Pathways courses. To make my courses relevant in the eyes of the students, I've worked hard to make my art and design course highly inclusive. Every student in every major at some point in the semester can see how their major area of study is impacted by art and design. My art and design course (6A or 6D) links to agriculture, economics, policy, ethics, engineering, etc. but the course is

<p>fundamentally rooted in art and design. Ideally, courses approved in other Pathways areas are rooted in the specific concepts but look for ways to engage art and design majors and every other corner of knowledge at VT. What we shouldn't do is open the door for every department on campus to offer courses in every Pathways area to satisfy their students graduation requirements without ever leaving the confines of their major curriculum offerings. ARCH, ART, BIOL, MGT, etc.... There is art in math and biology. And there is math and biology in art and design. But College of AAD students should still cross over and learn about math and biology in those departments but hopefully in learning about biology they will have some new insight in how biology and design are linked. Remember a lot of students taking Pathways courses are still trying to find their way in the university. Gen ed needs to be general.</p>
<p>I would prefer to have both</p>
<p>If current learning outcomes 1 and 3 are eliminated, and faculty choose only 2 of the three remaining to assess, a student could essentially take a class under Concept 6 in which no "practice" occurs which runs counter to the nature of Concept 6. Practice in Design and the Arts IS the employment of skills, tools and methods of working and/or the development of work through iterative process. Without either of those, there is no practice and, it seems to me, the original intention of "Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts" is compromised. I am not in favor of these proposed changes. Producing a fully developed work through iterative process lies at the very core of any studio art class and is the reason studio art classes fit Concept 6 so well. Streamlining in this case only waters down the integrity of the concept.</p>
<p>If historical context is added to the list of SLOs, we would either not assess it at all, or we would have to make considerable changes to our classes where we assess Design.</p>
<p>Likewise, why in the world would it make sense to request general feedback about SLOs without prioritizing those with expertise in the field? It is insulting to those who wrote the original SLOs just a few years ago.</p>
<p>Need to be sure that the identify and apply formal elements of design and arts is clearly articulated in the other SLOs. To allow for one unit to feel included, many faculty will need to modify courses so that process needs to be expedited and simple.</p>
<p>Note sure if it is worth the effort to reduce to 2 SLOs. Could just remove the "Integrative Concepts" if you want to streamline the program.</p>
<p>Rather than removing SLOs, consider combining them.</p>
<p>The first two of current SLOs are essential to being able to critically do the 5th. I don't see how critical practice is included in the proposed list of SLOs</p>
<p>The outcomes that are on the chopping block are integral to SOVA arts courses and curricula. Many courses center around these two outcomes. Eliminating them would allow non-arts courses (aka STEM courses) to use these outcomes that should be specific to SOVA.</p>

7. Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the United States



What additional feedback do you have about the proposed changes for Critical Analysis of Identity and Equity in the United States?
Again, no reduction.
I am not inclined to leave out SLO 5. It is the only one that acknowledges community as part of identify and equity
I think the verbiage on 1 and 2 come across as divisive. I would prefer to see the old #3 "Demonstrate how creative works analyze and/or reimagine diversity in human experiences in the United States (particularly or in comparative perspective)" and old #5 be used "Analyze the interactive relationships between place, space, identity formation, and sense of community in the United States (particularly or in comparative perspective)."
It sometimes seems that college is the only place that this can be learned sometimes. I do not see how skimping on this will make a better world for everyone.
Less is more!
SLO 3 is stated in much more accessible language AND easier to assess in class. As opposed to the argument in the Powerpoint, SLO 4 is FAR more readily evaluated WITHIN SLO 3 than the other way around. Additionally, #4 is written in highly specialized cultural studies-type language that I am afraid would dissuade people who are less familiar with DEI from incorporating this Concept into their courses. We need more VT discourse about Concept 7, not less. This is especially important because all these SLOs were already written for a learning level above general education, so the bundle (thank you for shrinking the bundle) needs to be more accessible and #4 does not accomplish this goal (Deleting #5 is a great idea).
These changes belittle the hundreds of hours that went into developing the original SLOs just a few years ago, and is insulting to those who invested in that process
These SLO's are too biased toward a particular ideology. The framing and jargon of the SLO's themselves presuppose a certain narrow philosophy. They should not be used.

IV. Additional Feedback

Please use the space below to provide any additional feedback you'd like to share.
anything we can do to streamline the process would be great.
Don't remove any criteria
I agree with the strong negative feedback that I have heard in opposition to this proposal, specifically that the rationale to simplify the assessment process is in fact prioritizing assessment over Pathway's mission for student learning and success.
I am not clear on why three is a magic number for SLOs or why so few are deemed important to assess as they demonstrate student learning. I'm sure there was discussion on that, but it is missing from this presentation and request for substantive feedback.
I am not in favor of taking away choices for assessment!
I am not in favor of the changes as they stand, I think this needs a second look.
I am not in favor of the streamlining as it is currently proposed if it weekend the overall impact of the SLOs
I am very much in favor of streamlining Pathways SLOs!
I don't believe that these outcomes need to be streamlined. I fear the integrity of the Pathways courses will be compromised.

I find the data-driven method of deciding whether or not to eliminate an SLO misses out on evaluating meaningful teaching and learning outcomes. It will lead to less depth and diversity in the education students are exposed to at VT.
I have developed and teach two Pathways courses and will be developing a third next year. Overall, I appreciate the work of the committee in reducing the burden in assessment, but also, in so doing, for making Pathways more accessible to more majors. I believe in the importance of general education for creating a well-informed and more well-rounded global citizenry. If anything, I would increase the amount of Pathways requirements, not decrease them.
I like the other broad suggestions (no assessment for summer and the frequency change) proposed for the assessment process.
I only answer the questions for the Core Concept relevant for my class. I am generally in favor, though, of reducing the number of outcomes in each area.
I personally don't feel that the gathering of Pathways assessment data is an unreasonably taxing commitment. That said, I'd appreciate clarification regarding the reasons that support the frequency and scope of Pathway assessment.
I recommend streamlining the ethical and global awareness SLO measures as well.
I strongly object to these changes; if reducing assessment is the goal it seems obvious to only have 3 out of 5 SLO assessed versus completely eliminating 2/ 5 SLOS.
I wholeheartedly approve the proposed changes to Pathways 1 evaluation. It would free up more time during a pinch point in the year (finals week/final grade submission).
I worry that our Pathways courses are too narrow. Ideally every Pathways course is rooted in a single Pathways concept - taught by faculty with the greatest depth of knowledge in that area - but every course should link out and touch on the ideas in every other Pathways concept. Every Pathways course should help our students understand that life is a complex system and students working to make advancements in every area of study should have at least a base of knowledge in every other specialty.
I wouldn't recommend streamlining any of the Pathway areas SLO's
It's appalling to me that Pathways is proposing simplifying outcomes because assessment is hard. Maybe it's assessment that needs to be simplified, not the SLOs.
Keep all the current SLOs
Pathways is a unique program which should become more robust, not whittled down.
Thank you for the opportunity to submit feedback. The Pathways program is not that old and the nature of teaching changed drastically only a few years after it's implementation due to the pandemic. This causes me to question the relevance of the data on which these proposed changes are based.
Thank you for thoughtfully streamlining the assessment process. A more streamlined assessment process will let instructors spend more of their time actually teaching or meeting with students. I also appreciate the time you're taking to gather input.
Thank you for working to improve the pathways program.
Thank you.
The streamlining proposed makes sense to me.
These proposed changes seem sudden and based on minimal, skewed data. Pathways classes have been affected by Covid the past 2 years, so it does not seem there would be enough data to determine which outcomes should be cut. Faculty have worked diligently over the past few years to align their courses with each of the outcomes, and in many cases, the outcomes are integral to their curricula.
This is a new program, might need more time to determine what kinds of tweaking that needs to be done to make it stronger.
We are appreciative of the overarching streamlining and this requires less overall assessment for our UNIV course for Pathways. We are happy!

We need to get back to the core of our existence- why we teach and how we teach for students.

Will the SLO and rubric items for Ethics be evaluated at some point?

Appendix B



School of Visual Arts

203 Draper Road, NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

October 28, 2022

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to express strong objection to the proposed changes to Pathways that would reduce the number of Student Learning Outcomes in each concept from four to six per concept to three per concept. According to the circulated Powerpoint outlining the proposed changes (slide 4) "...this revision is focused on simplifying the assessment process..." If this is indeed the reason for revisiting Pathways Learning Outcomes, such a rationale prioritizes a (self-inflicted) cumbersome assessment process over Pathways' mission for student learning and student success. In this letter I highlight additional impacts of these changes, including the identity and value of each concept, course proposals and governance, and faculty morale.

Arguably, it is premature to endeavor to alter the Pathways curriculum, especially with such drastic and unsound revisions. We are at a point now, in 2022, where barely a class has graduated under the approved Pathways curriculum. Furthermore, in the brief time since Pathways was implemented, we have endured a global pandemic that severely impacted student success and instructor ability to meet certain outcomes. Any data collected from these first few years of Pathways implementation is therefore flawed and does not (and cannot) reflect an accurate assessment of the success of the outcomes. Simply put, the current approved Student Learning Outcomes within each Concept require additional data to measure their success and effectiveness.

Faculty in the School of Visual Arts have been heavily involved with Pathways since its inception. I served from 2012-2017 as the college representative to UCCGE (then UCCLC) and co-chaired the committee from 2015-2017, overseeing and spearheading the final draft of Pathways and seeing its approval through University Council in 2015. I was "in the trenches" during the intensive years when the original Concepts were formulated and Student Learning Outcomes for each Concept were written. It was a task in which hundreds of members of our VT community invested—faculty, students, staff and administration—because of the critical importance of the general education curriculum. These concepts and outcomes were debated, discussed, tweaked and refined countless times by disciplinary experts, non-disciplinary experts and administrative staff alike, including members of the Office of Assessment, who worked with the Pathways' team to ensure that robust assessment could occur. The current plan is something that everyone signed off on. Furthermore, I also served as co-chair and a member of the Pathways ad-hoc committee during the initial rush of new proposals, reading and reviewing hundreds of Pathways course proposals as well as Pathways minor proposals. Since then, a member of SOVA has fairly consistently represented our college at UCCGE.

The proposed changes claim to be data-driven, and the decisions to eliminate certain SLOs are based on the percentage by which the "streamlined" SLOs are currently used in Pathways proposals, with a plan to eliminate those SLOs that are used the least. However, this data-driven decision appears quite selective, or worse, arbitrary. For example, in Concept 2, Critical Thinking in the Humanities, the proposed changes would remove SLO 4 (synthesize multiple complex sources and create a cohesive narrative or argument) because it "is above the level appropriate for general education" and this SLO is "currently only utilized by 67.9% of Humanities courses" (slide 9). I would argue that 67.9% is in fact a very high rate of use. Moreover, if the decision is purely data-driven, why was SLO 3 (interpret texts and other created artifacts within multiple historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts) with a lower usage rate of 67.4% not proposed for removal? Such discrepancies are not apparent in the resources distributed detailing the proposed streamlining of SLOs and ostensibly require further justification.

In fact, for all concepts the SLOs that are under threat are used heavily—between 41.7% and 67.9%. To claim that these are being eliminated because they are not being used frequently enough is a specious argument.

The School of Visual Arts is especially troubled by the changes proposed to Concept 6, Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts, which, in my opinion, will be gutted by the proposed changes. When Pathways was written, discussions around CPDA Student Learning Outcomes were based on a near-universal opinion that students at Virginia Tech were lacking opportunities for a meaningful arts experience. In fact, one (of many) reason(s) for the transition to Pathways was recognizing that under the previous Curriculum for Liberal Education, Virginia Tech students were far behind our peers in adequate opportunities for arts and design experiences. The proposed changes, unfortunately, disregard these universally agreed upon concerns and dilute Concept 6 beyond recognition.

Slide 17 indicates that “the committee would like feedback from CPDA instructors on whether they think SLO 1 [identify and apply formal elements of design or the arts] or SLO 2 [explain the historical context of design or the arts] is most important to retain”. Such a request assumes that these distinct SLOs can somehow be ranked based on “importance” and undermines and dismisses the years of effort that faculty from all disciplines put into writing the original SLOs. Instructors have already provided feedback on these SLOs, when they were first written less than ten years ago. They are both critical for this concept. Furthermore, as Virginia Tech celebrates its sesquicentennial, the university has invested in projects that help us to capture and understand the institution’s history, both triumphant and regrettable. Such an understanding requires a capacity to critique the nuances through which historical records are kept, promoted and interpreted. The proposal to potentially remove SLO 2 from Concept 6 (explain the historical context of design or the arts) is baffling and utterly at odds with current investments and actions of the institution directly related to the understanding of historical context.

Also disturbing is the elimination of SLO 5 (produce a fully developed work through iterative processes of design or the arts) presumably because it is used by “only” 49.5% of CPDA courses (slide 17). Again, when Pathways was initially written less than ten years ago, each SLO was intensely discussed and debated, including the need for students to understand that the steps involved with creating or designing anything (a painting, a musical score, a business plan, an experiment) is an iterative, non-linear process. This is a challenging outcome to achieve, and that half of the classes approved for the Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts concept are addressing this outcome is a sign of success and something for which the university should be proud. It certainly should not be eliminated because it is, once again quite speciously, claimed to be used by “less than half” of Design/Arts courses.

The changes proposed threaten a further negative impact on the health of the arts and humanities at VT as well. While the changes to (for example) Concept 5 (Quantitative and Computational Thinking) do not necessarily make it easier for courses in the arts and humanities to introduce those concepts into course content, by “streamlining” (and thereby weakening) the SLOs, Pathways (or the Office of Assessment) is opening the door to non-specialists teaching arts and humanities content in their courses for Pathways credit. Therefore, UCCGE can anticipate an increased number of proposals from STEM disciplines hoping to meet the outcomes of Concept 2 and Concept 6 in order to count required in-major courses towards Pathways. The proposed “streamlining” thus effectively lowers the bar for what it means for a course to meet the SLOs for both Critique and Practice in Design and the Arts and Critical Thinking in the Humanities. This sort of dilution of already robust SLOs would not only disadvantage students, but undercut the governance process.

This letter has referenced the amount of intellectual effort that went into the approved Pathways curriculum by those involved and invested in the process. Here I would like to speak to the effort put in by all faculty who submitted new and revised course proposals to meet the current SLOs. As someone who was present at many of the meetings and led open fora with faculty from across the university in 2014-2015 to discuss the impact of Pathways on their courses, I can assure the committee that a major hurdle was explaining to faculty that all courses had to be re-proposed, reviewed and voted on by the ad-hoc Pathways committee before they would be included in the Pathways curriculum. Faculty were understandably distressed by the amount of work involved, and buy-in for the current plan was a slow and often painful process.

While the Powerpoint makes clear that only a few proposals will have to be rewritten and resubmitted if the proposed changes are approved, faculty who in very recent memory were compelled to put in the significant amount of effort to rewrite and rethink courses to meet Pathways SLOs, only to find out that within just a few years their efforts are outdated (at best) and obsolete (at worst) undermines faculty engagement with institutional initiatives at a

time when faculty morale is already low. That these changes are being made to “simplify the assessment process” is a further indication that the efforts of faculty are not valued by certain administrative offices at Virginia Tech.

I urge the committee to reconsider the timing of these proposed changes, rethink the rationale for making them, and work to enfranchise a larger portion of relevant faculty, staff, and administrative constituents in any revision process moving forward. Furthermore, I urge the committee to only consider any changes once a reasonable set of data has been gathered,

Please let me know if I can offer further or more detailed feedback to the committee.

Sincerely,

Ann-Marie Knoblauch
Director, School of Visual Arts
Associate Professor, Art History