

FYS Objectives Revision Proposal

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Proposal summary: The 8 current FYS objectives reflect a number of core objectives that embody defining characteristics of the seminar experience, alongside a number of important but more supplemental and optional objectives. It can be helpful to highlight this distinction by sorting the objectives into “core” and “recommended” groups. Additional minor wording tweaks to synthesize and update how FYS language and practice have evolved since 1998 are discussed. The proposal is intended not as an overhaul of FYS objectives and practice, but rather a minor updating of organization and language. The only recommendation that moves beyond this minor scope includes the development of 1 new recommended objective aimed at increasing cultural appreciation in students.

Original FYS Objectives - *Students will:*

1. Explore an intellectually important topic with an instructor and with peers.
2. Read primary texts critically.
3. Discuss primary texts in a seminar format.
4. Investigate specific topics and write up their conclusions in an expository paper.
5. Present their ideas for discussion and critical reflection.
6. Where appropriate, engage in problem-solving in a small group context.
7. Attend out-of-class events and discuss them in class.
8. Learn about the purposes of a liberal arts education, including personal and intellectual development as well as professional and career preparation.

Proposed FYS Objectives Revisions:

CORE Objectives - *Students will...*

1. Explore an intellectually important topic with an instructor and with peers.
2. Read primary texts critically and discuss them in a seminar format.
3. Investigate specific topics and communicate their understanding through an appropriate form of writing or other medium (e.g. oral presentation, digital media).
4. Present their ideas for discussion and critical reflection.
5. Learn about the purposes of a liberal arts education, including personal and intellectual development as well as vocational discernment and career preparation.

Recommended Objectives - *Students will...*

1. *[New]* Develop an appreciation for cultural similarities and differences and how they affect our interactions with others in our global society.
2. Where appropriate, engage in problem-solving in a small group context.
3. Attend out-of-class events and discuss them in class as part of being introduced to the college as an intellectual community.

Rationale for Minor FYS Objectives Revisions:

- FYS was asked to reconsider our objectives. The provost along with the “First Year Experience” ad-hoc group (commissioned by the provost in 2013) asked FYS and General Education to consider whether FYS might be one of the places where Hope address some of our campus-wide deficiencies in cross cultural understanding and communication. The provost also advised that minor changes be written by the Directors of FYS and General Education and proposed to the Academic Affairs Board, whereas foundational changes would require extended faculty input.
- Some of the original objectives are more central to the defining characteristics of a seminar, while others are more supplemental, do not make sense for all FYS topics, and have for years (we think appropriately) been presented and practiced as recommended options. These distinctions led us to the consideration of two categories of objectives – “core” and “recommended.”

Original Objective

Observation and Recommendation

Revised Objectives CORE objectives

1. Explore an intellectually important topic with an instructor and with peers.	Keep identical in CORE objectives.	1. Explore an intellectually important topic with an instructor and with peers.
2. Read primary texts critically.	Keep both fully intact in CORE objectives, but combine together as they are intimately tied.	2. Read primary texts critically and discuss them in a seminar format.
3. Discuss primary texts in a seminar format.	Keep in CORE objectives (with changes). <ul style="list-style-type: none">Change “conclusions” to “understanding” to broaden the types of knowledge and skill results for which this objective could refer.Change “expository paper” to “an appropriate form of writing or other medium (e.g. oral presentation, digital media).” It no longer seems fitting to have a FYS-wide writing objective in light of Hope’s new college writing program that designates various other courses (not including FYS) as official writing courses. Also, the expository paper objective/requirement is already relatively uncommon in FYS sections and has not been a part of faculty training in recent years. There has been an evolution over time in the appropriate types of writing and communication that FYS sections have embraced (including in the upcoming Mellon funded “Digital FYS” sections for Fall 2014).<i>This objective was revised in consultation with Courtney Werner, Hope’s Director of College Writing.</i>	3. Investigate specific topics and communicate their understanding through an appropriate form of writing or other medium (e.g. oral presentation, digital media).
5. Present their ideas for discussion and critical reflection.	Keep identical in CORE objectives.	4. Present their ideas for discussion and critical reflection.
6. Where appropriate, engage in problem-solving in a small group context.	Keep, but move to RECOMMENDED objectives. <ul style="list-style-type: none">While problem-solving is a valuable skill for first-year students (and essential in some sections), it already is introduced (i.e. “Where appropriate”) and practiced as a somewhat situational objective.	
7. Attend out-of-class events and discuss them in class.	Keep, but move to RECOMMENDED objectives. <ul style="list-style-type: none">While most or all FYS sections may benefit, the relationship of this attendance to course content will vary greatly amongst topics, has been presented to faculty as a recommendation, and therefore the objective does not seem to belong as a CORE objective.It is also recommended to add something to the objective to reflect some of the purpose of the objective, such as “as part of being introduced to the college as an intellectual community.”	
8. Learn about the purposes of a liberal arts education, including personal and intellectual development as well as professional and career preparation.	Keep in CORE objectives (with a slight wording change). <ul style="list-style-type: none">Change “professional” to “vocational discernment” (retain “career preparation”) to better reflect a broader and more purposeful approach to student self-awareness and corresponding commitments and planning. Vocation will be articulated in terms relating to the intersection of one’s (A) passions and interests, (B) strengths and gifts, and (C) the needs and purposes around us.	5. Learn about the purposes of a liberal arts education, including personal and intellectual development as well as vocational discernment and career preparation.
NEW recommended objective	NEW recommended objective	RECOMMENDED objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">NSSSE results and campus reports have demonstrated a need at Hope related to cross-cultural (and self) understanding and communication. Similarly, students at the Gainey Ranch FYS retreat made a call for FYS to be “<i>affirming identity rather than assimilating all students</i>” and that “<i>the understanding and inclusion of race and culture needs to be developed and fostered at Hope.</i>” The need and desire for this aspect of students’ transition to Hope plays a growing role in a liberal arts education.The difficulty of broad implementation, and the need of an objective aimed at such high stakes material necessitates that it is skillfully implemented as an option (at least initially), so as to not see more harm than good come from someone poorly attempting to implement something in this area.This is also intended as an introduction to some of the ideas and concepts students will learn more fully in their global learning courses.<i>This objective was developed in consultation with John Yeilding (FYE group member), Dede Johnston (Intergroup Dialogue leader), and Julia Randal (Director of Global Learning).</i>		1. Develop an appreciation for cultural similarities and differences and how they affect our interactions with others in our global society.
		2. Where appropriate, engage in problem-solving in a small group context.
		3. Attend out-of-class events and discuss them in class as part of being introduced to the college as an intellectual community.

Response to Academic Affairs Board Questions Regarding the FYS Objectives Revision Proposal

4-10-14

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Question #1 - Should the new objective for developing an appreciation for cultural similarities/differences and their impact on interactions with others in a global society be a core instead of recommended objective?

- We strongly believe, at least in the immediate future, that the cultural objective should be recommended only.
- FYS courses are taught by a college-wide range of faculty, with varying strengths and expertise, which may or may not include immediate skills in facilitating cultural appreciation.
- There are intentionally few directives about subject matter in the core FYS objectives (other important areas could have been included, such as introduction to Christianity, the importance of service, ethics, etc). We hesitate to promote one important value-infused area as a core objective required of all, as we hope to retain a high degree of faculty autonomy in developing their topic and course.
- The recommended approach recognizes the need for Hope College in this cultural area and encourages development of related conversations and resources without prescribing a content package for everyone and/or precluding the development of other topics and direction.
- In conversations with skilled instructors from *Global Learning* and the *Global Fellows Program*, we were advised to not include this as a core recommendation. There is genuine concern that some instructors, particularly without significant additional experience and training, could do more harm than good in this area.
- One notable means for supporting this objective is the Global Fellows Program, which has a limited capacity and cannot include all FYS faculty.
- Global Learning is already covered in the gen ed curriculum. In FYS we envision that some faculty will include minor resources and conversations in support of this objective, in a way that seeks to introduce cultural appreciation and global perspectives, to provide an introduction to rather than a replacement of a GL course those students will still take in the future.

Question #2 - Should the core communication objective be relaxed to include not (“only”) writing, but also other media (oral, digital, etc)?

- The revised objective seeks to broaden the means by which students communicate their understanding and perspectives from course content. This could include any appropriate writing approaches, or oral approaches, or multi-media approaches that the faculty deems most applicable for their course and for their skillset. We do not want to add specific mediums of expertise (e.g. expository writing instruction) to the faculty list of requirements, or areas for students to master, particularly in a 2-credit course.
- FYS is not one of Hope’s designated writing intensive courses. The Director of Writing (also an FYS instructor) agreed that a more generous writing and communication objective seemed most appropriate for FYS, and advised us on the suggested changes.
- Past practice demonstrates that specific forms for writing, such as the expository paper, simply do not happen universally. The FYS faculty realize (and are encouraged) to focus on the essential components of the class, such as critical engagement, discussion, and reflection on important intellectual topics. The modality to facilitate these components are secondary.

Question #3 - How will the Senior Seminar exercise of reflecting back on the FYS essay be carried out if there is no FYS written essay?

- FYS students will still be required to write their liberal arts essay. The essay is not explicitly included in the objectives (though it is an assignment in support of core objective 5), as the learning objectives do not include all common experiences (another common experience for example not in the objectives would be the library session visit).