

ACADEMIC GOALS OF A LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION AND ASSESSMENT

Holy Cross seeks to prepare students for a lifetime of learning and moral citizenship. They must therefore develop skills, acquire knowledge, and cultivate intellectual and moral habits that prepare them to live meaningful, purposeful lives and to assume informed, responsible roles in their families, communities, and the world. Accordingly, we intend that our students:

1. Develop those basic skills and competencies foundational to a liberal arts education. These include the ability to think critically, write and speak clearly, read closely, evaluate and present evidence, and use information resources and technology.
2. Achieve depth competency in a major, as determined by individual departments, and attain a measure of intellectual breadth by exploring the various modes of inquiry and expression that comprise the liberal arts. These include those modes of inquiry and expression tied to the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and the natural and mathematical sciences.
3. Develop those habits of mind and life that exemplify the intellectual and moral values central to the distinctive mission and identity of Holy Cross as a Jesuit and Catholic liberal arts college. These include a commitment to the well-being of the human community and the natural world; the pursuit of a more just society; reflective engagement with matters of moral, spiritual, and religious life; and, for those who choose, an appreciation of the intellectual heritage of Catholicism.

Written Expression

Students and faculty alike share responsibility for promoting the effective and wise use of language. Language is central to education since it is the chief means by which the transmission and exchange of ideas take place. Nowhere are clarity and precision of language so important or so difficult to achieve as in writing. Therefore, students and faculty ought to take special care to encourage excellence in writing.

To achieve this end, students should:

1. Recognize that they are expected to write well at all times;
2. Realize that the way they say something affects what they say;
3. Write, revise, and rewrite each paper so that it represents the best work they are able to do.

Similarly, faculty members should:

1. Set high standards for their own use of language;
2. Provide appropriate occasions for students to exercise their writing skills;
3. Set minimum standards of written expression for all courses;
4. Acquaint the students with those standards and inform them of their responsibility to meet them and the consequences if they do not;
5. Evaluate written work in light of effectiveness of expression as well as content;

6. Aid students in their development by pointing out deficiencies in their written work and assist them with special writing problems arising from the demands of a particular field of study.

Assessment

The College engages in a systematic program to gather feedback to improve teaching and learning, and the student experience. To that end, the Office of Assessment and Research (OAR) routinely collects direct measures of student learning that include student essays, exam questions, research papers, oral presentations, reflections, capstone projects, portfolios, or other student work as assigned in academic courses and programs. These samples may be kept on file to be used for assessment and accreditation purposes. OAR also administers a variety of indirect measures of assessment that include the distribution of nationally-normed and Holy Cross developed survey instruments to learn more about students' perceived learning gains and to better understand their undergraduate experience at Holy Cross. Assessment projects can also consist of individual interviews or focus groups conducted or approved by OAR staff with students about their learning and growth during their time at Holy Cross. All student responses and work collected for assessment is kept confidential by OAR and individual students are not connected to their responses or work products in any way. For more information about the College's assessment and research projects, survey cycle, or questions about assessment, visit the website of the Office of Assessment and Research (<https://www.holycross.edu/office-assessment-and-research> (<https://www.holycross.edu/office-assessment-and-research/>)), or contact Denise A. Bell, Ph.D., Director, Office of Assessment and Research, dbell@holycross.edu.