Bachelor of Liberal Arts – Assessment Plan
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Description

The Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree provides UAS students with a multidisciplinary course of academic study grounded in the Humanities. It is designed particularly for students who have already completed a two-year Associates degree, transfer students from other universities, and non-traditional students who have previously completed university credits.

Students consult with faculty in their areas of interest to design an interdisciplinary or individualized course of study. This Liberal Arts degree can lead to graduate school or jobs in which critical thinking and communication skills are valued. BLA graduates who are interested in teaching may also apply to the one-year Master at Arts in Teaching programs at UAS.

Mission Statement

The Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree provides students with a self-selected course of study in multiple disciplines, grounded in a Liberal Arts core, which meets individual academic, career and personal goals.

The Bachelor of Liberal Arts program meets this mission through the completion of a student-faculty designed major based in the Humanities, supplemented by Social Science, Mathematics and Natural Science, and supported by all faculty in the School of Arts and Sciences.

Core Values

The Bachelor of Liberal Arts promotes:

• Multidisciplinary Thinking: To demonstrate familiarity with content from diverse disciplines and be able to distinguish perspectives within those disciplines.

• Cultural Diversity: To recognize the myriad of beliefs, interactional patterns, and symbols shared among social groups.

• Social Awareness: To understand how a variety of social forces and cultural influences shape individual consciousness, experience, and status.
Program Objectives

Students who complete the Bachelor of Liberal Arts will:

• Develop breadth and depth of knowledge in content areas.
• Articulate ideas and content through clear, purposeful and coherent written expression.
• Critically reflect upon their personal beliefs and desires.
• Articulate how the program meets their academic, career and personal goals.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students fulfill core values and program objectives in the Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree through:

• **A Liberal Arts Core**: Students become *multidisciplinary thinkers* through a common set of humanities courses and at least one additional course in math, natural science, or social science. Fundamental to the Liberal Arts core are *cultural diversity* requirements in second languages, comparative studies, or gender studies. In the Orientation to the Humanities course required at the beginning of the degree program, students complete assignments that *critically reflect upon their personal beliefs and desires*. In the required BLA Student Portfolio course, students create their *self-designed course of multidisciplinary study* and establish an entry-level portfolio with examples of *written work* that include a resume, academic and creative work, and an essay that *articulates their academic, career and personal goals*.

• **Emphasis Fields**: In consultation with and mentored by a faculty advisor, all BLA students pursue their *self-selected course of multidisciplinary study* through an emphasis in Interdisciplinary Studies, a Designated Emphasis, or as an Independent Design. At least half of the coursework completed in these emphasis fields is at the upper-division level, and include assignments that demonstrate the student’s ability to *articulate ideas and content through clear, purposeful and coherent written expression*.

• **A Senior Capstone Project**: Students demonstrate mastery of *multidisciplinary knowledge* through the completion of a capstone project. The results of that project are presented in a *written* academic paper or capstone essay to be included in the student’s BLA portfolio.

• **The BLA portfolio**: In this portfolio, students *articulate how their BLA program of study has met their academic, career and personal goals*. Students establish their portfolios after admission to the Bachelor of Liberal Arts Degree program and continue to add to its content over the course of their program. During their graduating semester, students complete and present the finalized portfolio. The portfolio provides evidence that students have internalized the *core values* of the degree program and have met its *program goals*. The portfolio also serves as a method of *student self-assessment*. 
University Competencies

In addition to the core values, objectives, and student outcomes of the Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree program, the University of Alaska Southeast has established six areas of skill competency for all students:

- **Communication**: College graduates should be able to write, speak, read, and listen effectively for multiple purposes and to a variety of audiences.

- **Quantitative Skills**: College graduate should be able to read and follow logical reasoning, solve mathematical and quantitative problems, and apply logical and mathematical methods.

- **Information Literacy**: College graduates should be able to identify and locate needed information, analyze, integrate and communicate it, and evaluate its usefulness.

- **Computer Usage**: College graduates should have the knowledge to make efficient use of computers and information technology in their personal and professional lives.

- **Professional Behavior**: College graduates should have good work habits, make ethical decisions, recognize the value of community service, and engage in successful human relations.

- **Critical Thinking**: College graduates should be proficient in conceptualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, interpreting, and applying ideas and information.

All of these skill competencies are introduced through university General Education Requirements. The Bachelor of Liberal Arts program particularly emphasizes the development and mastery of written and oral communication, critical thinking, and professional behavior, although other competencies may be emphasized as determined by the individual student’s program of multidisciplinary courses.

Bachelor of Liberal Arts Student Assessment

All Bachelor of Liberal Arts students complete a common set of core requirements, gain depth and breadth of knowledge through multidisciplinary emphasis fields of study, and synthesize their learning through a capstone project. The BLA Student Portfolio is used as the basis for faculty evaluation of student success in the degree program, student self-assessment of academic and personal accomplishments in the program, and continuing program assessment.

**Liberal Arts Core**: The **academic** purpose of the Liberal Arts core is to provide students with a common body of knowledge, grounded in the Humanities. Its **cultural** purpose is to expose students to, and engage them with, a diversity of beliefs, people, and experiences. Its **social** purpose is for students to begin to regard themselves as a cohort of Liberal Arts students and to
critically reflect upon themselves and their relationship to society. The Liberal Arts core achieves these goals through the following curriculum:

• **Orientation to the Liberal Arts (HUM 200):** In this required introductory seminar, each student situates herself or himself in relation to the Liberal Arts tradition. The seminar provides a forum where participants read, critically examine, and discuss a common set of materials according to identified themes or issues in a group setting. This seminar emphasizes the university mandated skill competency of *professional behavior* by having students develop academic and interpersonal skills appropriate to seminar learning and professional civility. It also introduces the Bachelor of Liberal Arts core value of *multidisciplinary thinking* by familiarizing students with basic questions and modes of thinking within the liberal arts tradition. It also introduces students the core value of *social awareness* by situating herself or himself in relation to this tradition in a series of written assignments that require her or him to *critically reflect upon their personal beliefs and desires*.

• **BLA Student Portfolio (HUM 210):** In this required applied course, students develop individual Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree plans and initially establish an electronic BLA Portfolio which includes a resume, examples of best written work, examples of creative work, and representative work from required cultural diversity courses. The cornerstone of this initial portfolio is a “Personal Goals Essay,” which *articulate how the degree program will meet the student’s academic, career and personal goals*.

• **Philosophy (Introduction, Logic, or Ethics):** *Critical self-reflection* is a cornerstone of the Liberal Arts. At UAS, students may achieve this through PHIL 101, 201, 206 or 301. Students who have completed a course in Introduction to Philosophy, Logic, or Ethics at another university may apply that course to this requirement.

• **Communication, Literature or Writing Elective (upper-division):** Continuing development in *communication* is a university mandated skill competency supported by the Liberal Arts program objective that students *articulate ideas and content through clear, purposeful and coherent written expression*. Students continue to develop these skills through completion of an additional Communication (COMM) or Literature or Writing (ENGL) course at the 300 or 400 level.

• **Social Science, Math or Natural Science Elective:** In support of the Bachelor of Liberal Arts core value of *multidisciplinary thinking*, students are required to take at least one additional content course outside of the Humanities beyond General Education Requirements.

• **Cultural Diversity (two courses):** The Liberal Arts core value of *cultural diversity* is intended to introduce all Liberal Arts students to language acquisition beyond English, comparative knowledge societies and cultures (including Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle Eastern, and indigenous peoples), or to gender studies. The following UAS courses routinely qualify as cultural diversity courses.
**Emphasis Fields**: This is the primary place in the Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree program where students **develop breadth and depth of knowledge in content areas**. The three emphasis field options – Interdisciplinary Studies, Designated Emphasis, or Independent Design – all combine multiple disciplinary fields. For this reason, no single set of criteria covers all of core values, program objectives, or university competencies that might predominate in an individual student’s emphasis curriculum. At the same time, completion of the emphasis field constitutes a form of **formative and continual assessment** involving multiple submissions of academic work and faculty evaluation which provides students with accumulated opportunities to **articulate ideas and content through clear, purposeful and coherent written expression** and **critically reflect upon their personal beliefs and desires**.

**Capstone**: In HUM 499 Humanities Capstone, students complete capstone requirements to demonstrate **mastery of multidisciplinary content** in their individual Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree program. Student design, completion, and presentation of a capstone project are the primary outcomes for this course. Students also prepare and submit their completed BLA Student Portfolio, which provides the evidential basis for final assessment of each student’s attainment of Bachelor of Liberal Arts **core values and program objectives** and university skill **competencies**. With the support of a student’s faculty advisor, a 400-level internship, practicum, or independent study may be substituted for the capstone project, although the student is still required to meet the schedule of BLA Student Portfolio deadlines established in that term Humanities Capstone course.

**Final Student Assessment** is accomplished in three ways:

1. **Capstone Presentation**: During the final weeks of HUM 499 Humanities Capstone, all students eligible for graduation – including students who have completed a 400-level internship, practicum, or independent study – deliver a formal presentation on their capstone project for the other students in the seminar and the Liberal Arts faculty. Students and faculty in attendance complete an evaluation form for each presenter. The HUM 499 professor writes a final narrative assessment of **mastery of multidisciplinary content** based upon completion of the capstone project and the completed presentation evaluation forms.

2. **BLA Student Portfolio**: This portfolio is the cornerstone for student learning assessment overall. Students begin to compile an electronic portfolio in HUM 210 BLA Portfolio Review. In HUM 499 students complete that portfolio. Students who have completed a 400-level internship, practicum, or independent study follow the same schedule for completion of the portfolio as HUM 499 students.

   At mid-semester, students submit their portfolios to the HUM 499 Instructor and the Humanities Director of Composition and Assessment for formative written assessment comments. At the end of the semester, students submit their completed portfolio for evaluation by two assigned BLA degree program faculty.
Portfolio Contents with corresponding primary Program Objectives


3. Creative Work – e.g., creative writing (maximum 12-15 pp.), annotated slides (artwork, installations – PowerPoint or Word document), PowerPoint presentation, video (performance). *Program Objective: Breadth and Depth of Knowledge.*


**Assessment Rubric for Portfolio Evaluation:** The contents of each category in the portfolio is evaluated in three dimensions:

- CLEAR – Focus, clarity of expression, clarity of presentation (style)
- PURPOSEFUL – Approach, Use, Audience Awareness
- COHERENT – Organization, development

Each rubric element is evaluated on a four-point scale:

4 = Excellent
3 = Exceeds Expectations
2 = Meets Expectations
1 = Insufficiently Developed

The scores are compiled as aggregate data for purposes of program assessment.

**Narrative Evaluation:** Each portfolio evaluator will write a summary narrative evaluation of the portfolio, evaluating the student’s overall attainment of the BLA core values of *multidisciplinary knowledge, cultural diversity,* and *social awareness.*
3. Exit Survey: At the end of the semester, all graduating BLA students gather with BLA faculty to provide evaluations of their experiences in the BLA program. Each student will give an oral evaluation of their personal experiences in the program, followed by a general discussion of all students with attendant BLA faculty. At this time, students will also complete a written evaluation that will be used for purposes of program assessment.

Program Assessment Cycle

Every academic year, both student and program assessment occurs on the following schedule:

1. Faculty Evaluation of current BLA graduates: occurs every semester at the time of exit interviews.

2. BLA Coordinator: prepares mid-year and year-end degree program reports for the BLA Program Faculty, Dean of Arts & Sciences, and the Provost’s office.

3. BLA Program Faculty Annual Review: during Fall Convocation each year, the BLA faculty to review data gathered from BLA graduate exit interviews and to suggest modifications to the program as needed.

4. Student Self-Assessment: occurs at the beginning and end of the degree program through the BLA Student Portfolio.

5. BLA Program Review: occurs every five years.

ATTACHMENTS

1. HUM 200 & 210 Syllabi
2. HUM 499 Syllabus
3. Capstone Presentation Evaluation Form
4. Final Portfolio Evaluation Rubric and Form
5. Student Portfolio Narrative Summary Evaluation Form
6. BLA Graduate Exit Survey Form