

## Learning outcomes for “Communication” in the new BA

There is much to like in the submissions from the five groups to the BA degree. Each identifies a compelling theme or even themes that would attract students and reward their study in those programs. In addition to these themes, though, I think that the proposals need to identify **learning outcomes**. Three of the five proposals do not address written communication learning outcomes. The BA in Creative Thinking and the Visual Communication Strategies, Skills and Reflections for the Twenty-First-Century BA do not include learning goals for communication (or at least written communication), and the Experiential Learning proposal mentions communication in passing as one of a series of transferable skills.

Two of the proposals identify learning outcomes:

- **‘Interdisciplinary, Intercultural, and International’ Skills:**  
“critical thinking and problem solving skills, (ii) creative and analogical thinking, (iii) writing and communication skills, (iv) interpersonal and intercultural skills, and (v) research skills, as well as (vi) media literacy.”

In this case, not much is said beyond naming the learning goal—writing and communication skills. However, the global/cross-cultural proposal goes into more detail:

- **The Global Value of the 21st Century BA, in Cross-Cultural Perspective**  
iii) Effective communication skills are a critical hallmark of the BA graduate. These are more important than ever given the speed of communication processes and the range of communication technologies. Verbal and visual analytical strategies are essential parts of communication competencies. These critical capacities can be creatively applied in a range of employment or entrepreneurial settings.  
How do we teach the skills aimed at achieving a globally knowledgeable and intellectually sophisticated BA graduate? iv) Writing competency is crucial for all BA graduates, allowing the expression of critical thinking, with interpretations and analyses of global/local/chronological connections. Higher standards of writing competence and increased requirements for research papers should be explicitly part of undergraduate training. Examples already exist of this preparation. We believe it should be more generally applied. The application of these skills may involve various media platforms before or after graduate. But effective critical thinking/writing is at the heart of all these endeavours.

The integration of the visual and verbal here would also fit well with the visual communication strategies proposal.

Restating the learning goals from the global/cross-cultural proposal might look like this:

- (i) Upon graduation, students will be able to use language to critique ideas and concepts.
- (ii) Upon graduation, students will be able to analyse and interpret ideas, concepts and texts through their own written work.
- (iii) Upon graduation, students will be able to write sophisticated research-based documents, including term papers.

I think the next stage for each of the groups proposing a new BA would need to include writing learning outcomes/goals for communication (and whatever other key learning outcomes/goals we agree are important for the BA). The list above is a good start.

A step beyond identifying the learning outcomes/goals would be to identify the strategies used to achieve the learning goals.

- Should students take a writing course?
- Should each program offer a “writing in the major” course?
- Should students create a portfolio of writing as part of a capping exercise or senior course in their major area of study?
- Should the Writing Across the Curriculum program provide group writing tutorials to all 300 and 400 level classes?

With learning outcomes specified for each proposal, we would have a better sense of the potential for each one. Until we know what the learning outcomes/goals are for each proposal, and, even better, how each group proposes that students will attain each outcome/goal, I don't think we have the information we need to judge which of the proposed programs is the best one.

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