PROFICIENCY INFUSION GUIDELINES

These are guidelines, not a checklist of required elements. Course proposals should include an explanation of how the course is suitable to the requirement, understanding that the approval committee will consider courses that approach these elements creatively, with disciplinary norms in mind.

Not every course is suited to every proficiency; should you choose to infuse a course, you should choose to infuse a course, you should select the proficiencies that best balance course content and course assignments (i.e. infusion of any proficiency should not infringe or radically change overall course content. Teaching of the proficiency should be in the service of course content. If it alters the content then the course should be redesigned and resubmitted to the college for approval as a new course.

Information Fluency Infusion Guidelines

DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF THE PROFICIENCY

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education defines Information Fluency as “an intellectual framework for identifying, finding, understanding, evaluating and using information. It includes determining the nature and extent of needed information; accessing information effectively and efficiently; evaluating critically information and its sources; incorporating selected information in the learner’s knowledge base and value system; using information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose; understanding the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and information technology; and observing laws, regulations, and institutional policies related to the access and use of information” (in: Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation Developing Research & Communication Skills Guidelines for Information Literacy in the Curriculum, 2002, p. 32).

OBJECTIVES

To develop students’ abilities to identify, find, understand, evaluate, and use information. This includes determining the nature and extent of the needed information; accessing information effectively and efficiently; evaluating critically information and its sources; using information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose within their assignments; and understanding the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and information technology. Students will also gain the ability to incorporate information with their own analysis and understanding, as well as develop their own research processes and strategies.

COURSE READINGS/MATERIALS
Some time should be spent in class to discuss the research process, as opposed to just focusing on the final research assignment. Best practices include:

- Discussion of how information is structured
- what resources are most appropriate for the different stages of the research process

ASSIGNMENTS

Class assignments should be designed to address developmental stages in the research process, which are effectively articulated by Dr. Carol Kuhlthau in her book, *Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services Second Edition*. These suggest that students must become aware of their own research experience and the stages through which it develops.

Best practices include:
- research logs
- on-line portfolios
- directed class discussion

Research projects should include a series of small assignments, independent of the final project, that are designed to familiarize students with a wide variety of research tools. In general library instruction results in best practices, which also include but are not limited to such assignments as:

- Select a topic in which a review article was written a number of years ago and update that review
- Examine coverage of a controversial issue in several sources (newspaper editorial, scholarly journal, etc.
- Brainstorm on key terms to use in order to find information on a given topic
- Compare Internet and Database searches: provide a precise statement of a search topic, using both venues for your research. Compare the findings

Best practices have shown that a research intensive paper should represent a culmination of the following components. At various stages, students submit:

- Topic clearly defined
- Bibliography of clearly relevant resources
- Outline of paper
- Thesis statement
- Opening paragraph and summary

(The purpose of this preliminary work is for the students to focus on the stages of research and the parts of a paper, rather than on the writing of it.)

TESTS AND EXAMS
Information Fluency does not lend itself particularly well to exams or tests; however, the library has developed several on-line tests for students to check their level of Information Fluency, and these may be adopted by instructors for use in their courses, or for models for creating their own timed assessments.

**Grading**

At least one-third of course grade will be based on a research project.

Students should be graded on the quality of their research process, independently of the final project grade.

**Proficiency-Specific Information**

Instructors are expected to familiarize themselves with the ACRL information fluency guidelines:
(http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm#ildef)

[These standards were reviewed by the ACRL Standards Committee and approved by the Board of Directors of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) on January 18, 2000, at the Midwinter Meeting of the American Library Association in San Antonio, Texas. These standards were also endorsed by the American Association for Higher Education (October 1999) and the Council of Independent Colleges (February 2004). A PDF of this document is available.]

**General Assessment Guideline for Each Proficiency**

Instructors should be aware that the University is charged with assessing the success of infusing courses with proficiencies. The best assessment will be based upon what faculty members believe is happening in their classrooms. The Core has adopted the principle that, on a department-wide basis, instructors teaching infused courses WILL meet to evaluate the extent to which students are attaining the chosen proficiency. These meetings WILL be evidence- and criteria-based. That is, evidence from student work and the application of criteria chosen by the instructors should be the basis of discussions at meetings held at the end of each year or semester. Brief reports WILL summarize the conclusions reached, the basis upon which they were made, one or two suggestions for improving instruction, and possible requests for resources or faculty development to facilitate those improvements.