**FHSU General Education Committee**

**Minutes**

Meeting Called by

Bradley Will, Chair

Date: Monday October 16, 2017

Time: 3:30-4:30

Location: Rarick 205

Members

Douglas Drabkin (AHSS)

Marcella Marez (AHSS)

Jessica Heronemus (BE)

David Schmidt (BE)

Kevin Splichal (Ed)

Teresa Woods (Ed)

Trey Hill (HBS)

Glen McNeil (HBS)

William Weber (STM)

Tom Schafer (STM)

Robyn Hartman (Lib)

Helen Miles (Senate)

Adam Schibi (SGA)

Cheryl Duffy (Goss Engl)

Kenton Russell (FYE)

Tanya Smith (Grad Sch)

3:32 (1 minute) All members were present with the exception of Hartman and Weber. Duffy served as proxy for Hartman. Paul Lucas returned as an observer.

3:33 (48 minutes) The committee returned to the proposal Drabkin introduced at the end of the last meeting for simplifying and organizing the formulation of measurable learning outcomes for the seven of modes of inquiry. (See appendix.) The idea, roughly, is to give subgroups examples of a set of three outcomes for each mode. The first would demonstrate that the student understands something of ***the scope*** of the mode, what sorts of things it is concerned with. The second would demonstrate that the student has achieved some ***basic skill*** at thinking in the mode. And the third would demonstrate that the student appreciates something of ***the significance*** of the mode as an important way to organize experience in meaningful ways. There was general consensus that this is a good approach for getting the various subgroups that would be tasked with formulating outcomes for each mode of inquiry off the ground and moving more or less in the same direction, following the lead of the social science subgroup (see minutes from 10/9/17). Chair cautioned that we not interpret the proposal as a rigid template; if the subgroups have other ideas, we must be open to considering them. That said, the model gives the subgroups something to work with, it makes it clearer what sort of things we’re looking for, and it makes it less likely that we will have long lists of narrowly prescriptive outcomes coming back to us. Splichal suggested that, while the subgroups may have other ideas, the scope/skill/significance structure makes good sense. Miles asked, by way of clarification, whether every course admitted to the general education program under one or another of the modes of inquiry would have to meet all the learning outcomes for that mode; the answer was yes. McNeil asked whether it may not be better to provide just a single example of a set of measurable learning outcomes, perhaps an edited version of the ones we discussed last week from the social scientific mode, instead of a less refined list of all seven. Along these lines, Splichal and Heronemus wondered if it may not be good enough to explain the scope/skill/significance idea and leave the outcomes unspecified for the subgroups to work out. Woods, however, strongly recommended providing examples with parallel structure that suggest the overall result we’re trying to achieve. Chair agreed that a rough sketch of examples from across all the modes is likely to do more good than harm. It may, for instance, succeed in keeping the subgroups to just three outcomes. And it will help our colleagues see that what we’re working on here is not just a “selection of courses,” but “a system of courses.” As Splichal put it, we want to make the subgroups “think through the big picture.”

4:20 (7 minutes) Conversation turned to how to operationalize all this. It was agreed, next meeting, to finish setting up all of the modes-of-inquiry measurable-learning-outcome subgroups. Chair asked that committee members come to the meeting with a list of “stakeholders”: departments likely to be offering general education courses in each of the modes of inquiry. It was also agreed to return to discussing the social scientific learning outcomes if time permits.

4:27 Meeting ended. The next meeting will be Monday October 23 at 3:30 PM in Rarick 205.

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**Submitted by D. Drabkin, Recording Secretary**



***Appendix:***

**AN IDEA FOR GETTING STARTED FORMULATING MEASURABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**FOR THE SEVEN MODES OF INQUIRY**

*The idea – and this is just a draft, the sketch of an idea – is to have three outcomes for each mode of inquiry. The first outcome would demonstrate that the student understands something of* ***the scope*** *of the mode, what sorts of things it is concerned with. The second would demonstrate that the student has achieved some* ***basic skill*** *at thinking in the mode. And the third would demonstrate that the student appreciates something of* ***the significance*** *of the mode as an important way to organize experience in meaningful ways. In formulating these outcomes, we should bear in mind that we want our graduates to be able to answer questions such as: Why should I ever trust a scientist? Why should I ever trust an historian? Why should I ever trust a film critic? And so on.*

**AESTHETIC**

*The student will*

* identify the characteristics that distinguish aesthetic questions (questions of interpretation and appreciation of subjective experience) from other kinds of questions
* compose and revise an essay that explores an aesthetic question by use of imaginative reasoning (description of the experience, analysis of notable elements, comparison and contrast with other experiences, interpretation of the experience, and critical assessment)
* explain how the answers given to aesthetic questions enable people to organize their concerns and make sense of their lives

**PHILOSOPHICAL**

*The student will*

* identify the characteristics that distinguish philosophical questions (non-empirical questions suitable for being approached dialectically) from other kinds of questions

* compose and revise an essay that explores a philosophical question by use of dialectical reasoning (stating the question, providing reasoning in support of an answer, explaining the strongest objection, replying to the objection, and resolving the discussion)
* explain how the answers given to philosophical questions enable people to organize their concerns and make sense of their lives

**MATHEMATICAL**

*The student will*

* identify the characteristics that distinguish mathematical questions (questions of necessary truth suitable for being approached through pure logic) from other kinds of questions
* solve a complex problem by identifying the mathematical question that underlies it and explaining why the answer to this underlying question must be what it is
* explain how the answers given to mathematical questions enable people to organize their concerns and make sense of their lives

**NATURAL SCIENTIFIC**

*The student will*

* identify the characteristics that distinguish natural science questions (questions of causal explanation that can be answered through empirical study) from other kinds of questions
* evaluate the merits of an example of natural scientific research at the level of an informed citizen
* explain how the answers given to natural science questions enable people to organize their concerns and make sense of their lives

**SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC**

*The student will*

* identify the characteristics that distinguish social science questions (questions about human society and behavior that can be answered through empirical study) from other kinds of questions
* “evaluate the merits of social scientific research at the level of an informed citizen”
* explain how the answers given to social science questions enable people to organize their concerns and make sense of their lives

**HISTORICAL**

*The student will*

* identify the characteristics that distinguish historical questions (narrative approach to human data) from other kinds of questions
* compose and revise an essay that explores an historical question making appropriate use primary and secondary source documents
* explain how the answers given to historical questions enable people to organize their concerns and make sense of their lives

**TECHNOLOGICAL**

*The student will*

* identify the characteristics that distinguish technological questions (practical problems that can be solved through instrumental reasoning) from other kinds of questions
* develop a working plan (sequence of steps/business plan/algorithm) to bring about an adequate solution to a difficult practical problem
* explain how the answers given to technological questions enable people to organize their concerns and make sense of their lives