

Global Understanding

Description and Learning Outcomes

The goal of the Global Understanding category is to help students see the world from multiple perspectives, reflect upon their positions in a global society, and be prepared for future engagement as global citizens. While it may include a historical perspective, Global Understanding courses focus primarily on a contemporary understanding of one's place in a global society.

Courses in this category must meet a minimum of three of the following learning outcomes:

1. **Diverse Perspectives:** Identify and articulate one's own values and how those values influence their interactions and relationships with others, both locally and globally.
2. **Understanding Global Systems:** Demonstrate understanding of how the patterns and processes of globalization make visible the interconnections and differences among and within contemporary global societies.
3. **Intercultural Competence:** Demonstrate the development of intercultural competencies.
4. **Global Problem Solving:** Explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.

Approved Courses and Enrollment

Students are required to pass one course approved for Global Understanding or transfer in an appropriate course. Global Understanding courses enroll over 10,000 students each year with an average class size of 34 (see Table 12). It should be noted that average course sizes vary widely by school/college, with the smallest class sizes offered in Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ave = 24) and Volgenau (ave = 25), and the largest in the Schar School of Policy and Government (ave = 75) and Science (ave = 59). Global Understanding courses are offered at all levels (100-400 course numbers). Figure 21 shows enrollment trends over the past five years.

Students in the Honors College take HNRS 131: Contemporary Social Issues to fulfill their learning outcomes in this category. Although not formally a part of the Mason Core, HNRS 131 is also included in this assessment.

Courses Included in Assessment

The assessment period included 123 course sections taught in fall 2017, three sections taught at Mason Korea in fall 2018, eight sections of Honors 131 in fall 2018, and two sections of INTS 303 taught in spring 2019. Of the total enrollment, 71 percent were enrolled in lower-division (100-200 level) courses (see Table 10). All sections offered in the assessment period were expected to participate. Of the 136 course sections included in the assessment period, 75% submitted materials.

Table 10. Mason Core Global Understanding Course Enrollment in Assessment Period

| | #Sections | Enrollment | % Total Enrollment |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Lower Division (100-200 level) | 87 | 3,483 | 71.3% |
| Upper Division Section (300-400 level) | 49 | 1,404 | 28.7% |
| TOTAL | 136 | 4,887 | |

Six courses accounted for 47% of the Global Understanding enrollment in the assessment period and 42.6% of the samples included in the assessment (see Table 11). Three courses (BUS 200, GCH 205, and GLOA 101) are slightly overrepresented in the sample, and three courses (GGS 101, RELI 100, and GOVT 133) are underrepresented.

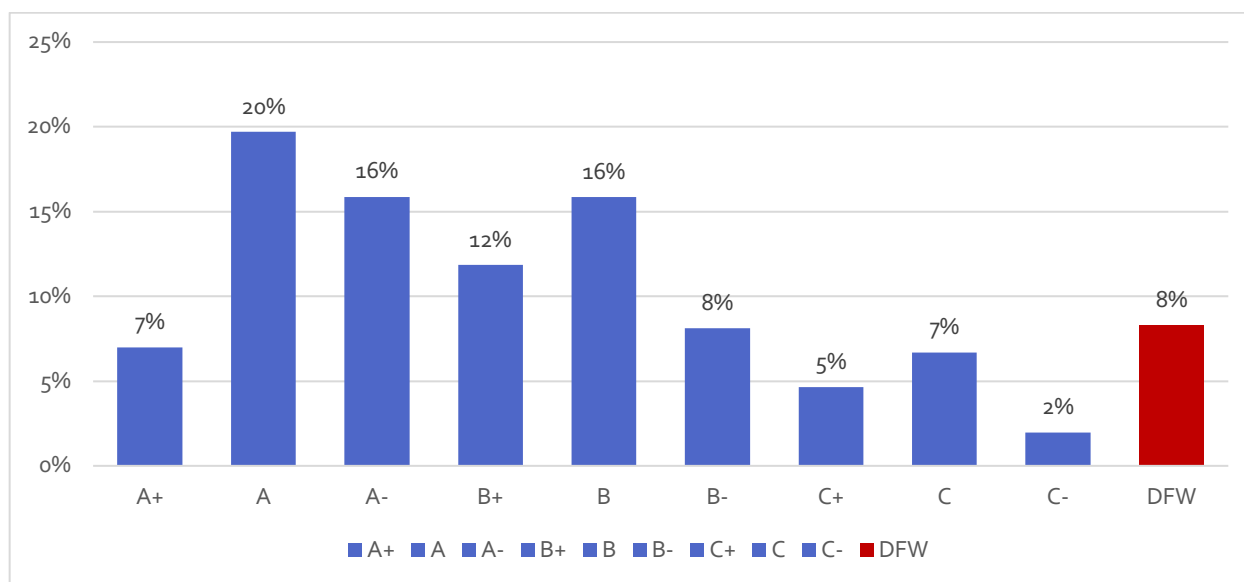
Table 11. Mason Core Global Understanding Top Six Enrolled Courses in Assessment Period

| Course | % Global Understanding Course Enrollment | % Work Samples in Assessment |
|----------|--|------------------------------|
| BUS 200 | 13.3% | 16.5% |
| GCH 205 | 8% | 9.6% |
| GGS 101 | 7.6% | 1.5% |
| GLOA 101 | 6.7% | 9.4% |
| RELI 100 | 5.8% | 2.9% |
| GOVT 133 | 5.6% | 2.7% |

Enrollment and Grades Distribution

There were 4,887 students enrolled in Global Understanding courses in the assessment period. Of these, 30 chose to audit their course, resulting in 4,857 students ending the semester with a grade or "W". Ninety-two percent of these students earned a passing grade (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Grades Distribution for Global Understanding Courses in the Assessment Period



Assessment Methods

Student work samples were requested from all course sections taught in the assessment period. Faculty were asked to submit samples that represented student submissions completed in the final third part of the semester and that allowed students to demonstrate their learning on one or more of the expected course learning outcomes. Samples were selected using randomized course enrollment lists to insure the best possible representative sample.

The **Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Global Understanding** was used for this assessment. The rubric was adapted from the Global Learning VALUE rubric (AAC&U, 2014) by Mason faculty as a tool to assess individual student work on four learning tasks or outcomes. The rubric uses four performance descriptors: Benchmark, Emerging Milestone, Advanced Milestone, and Capstone, as well as an option for "no evidence." The performance descriptors are developmental, identifying student performance levels in a context of learning and growth. The rubric is intended to be used across all of the years of a student's college experience, and is not limited to a single course, assignment, or student class level.

Using a process modeled after the VALUE Institute reviewer calibration, faculty reviewers were trained to use the rubric to assess student work. Reviews were normed to produce consistent ratings across reviewers. Reviewers met for an in-person, one-day training and review session and completed the reviews of student work by the end of the day. Reviewers were faculty members who have taught Global Understanding courses. Reviewers earned a small stipend for their efforts. A second review was conducted in August 2019 with some of the original reviewers.

Each student work sample was assessed twice. Results were analyzed for interrater reliability; discrepant reviews were resolved using a third review.

Learning Outcomes Assessment Results

Figures 14 and 15 display aggregate results from 679 ratings. Figure 14 includes “no evidence” ratings. A rating of “no evidence” was used when the learning outcome could not be seen in the sample; this could mean that either the assignment did not require application of the outcome, or that the student did not demonstrate it. A “no evidence” rating provides important information in aggregate but is given no value for an individual sample. Figure 15 displays aggregate results excluding “no evidence” ratings.

Figure 14. Assessment Results, Aggregated, including “No Evidence” Ratings

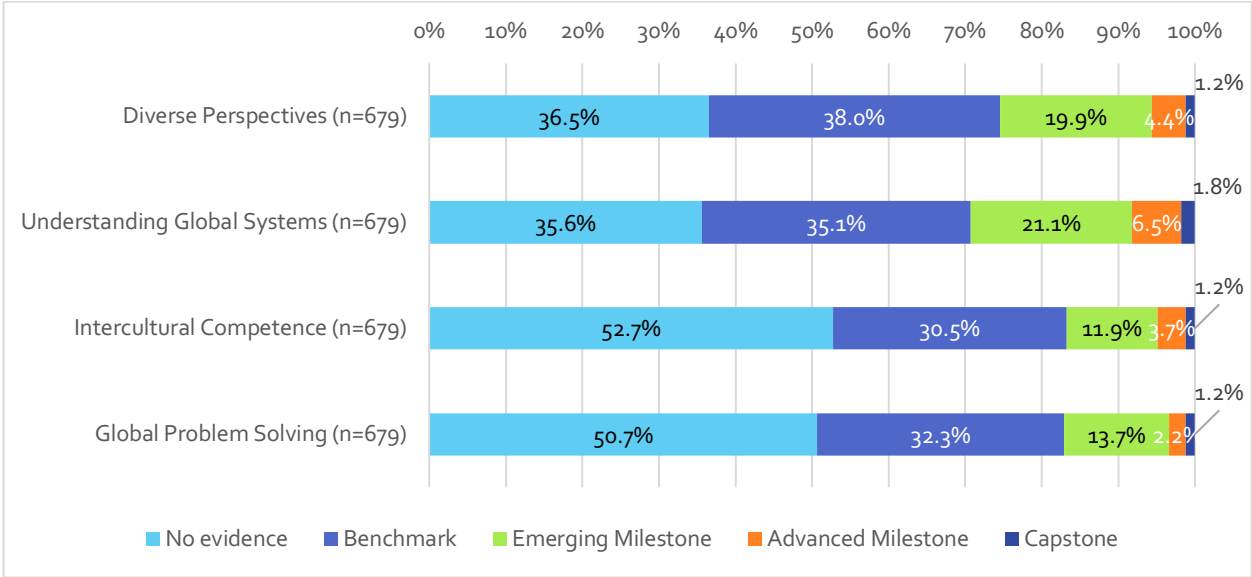
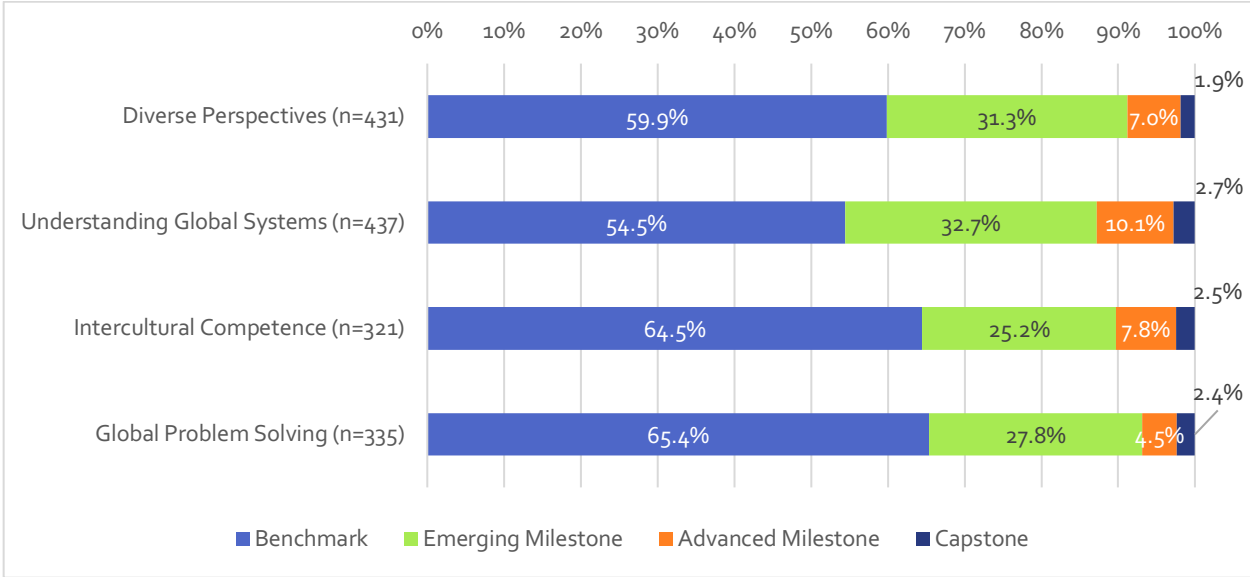


Figure 15. Assessment Results, Aggregated, excluding "No Evidence" Ratings



Figures 16-19 display ratings by learning outcome, disaggregated by lower- versus upper-division levels. Analytical comparisons are made in the next section.

Figure 16. Diverse Perspectives

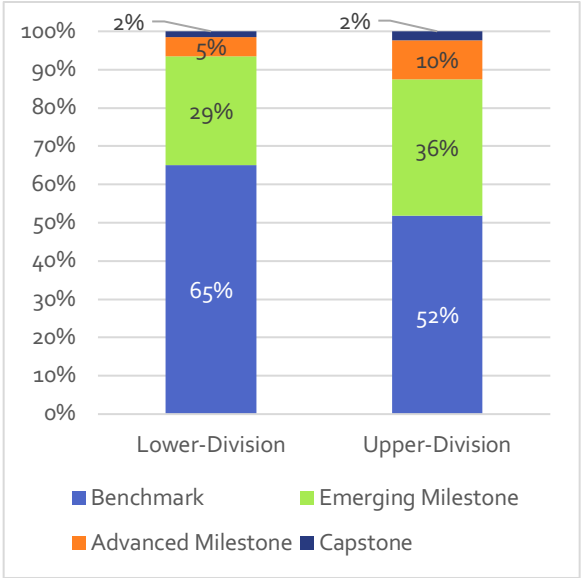


Figure 17. Understanding Global Systems

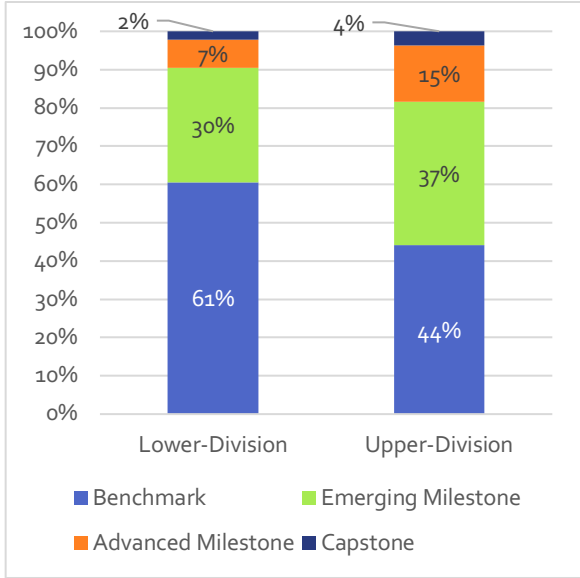


Figure 18. Intercultural Competence

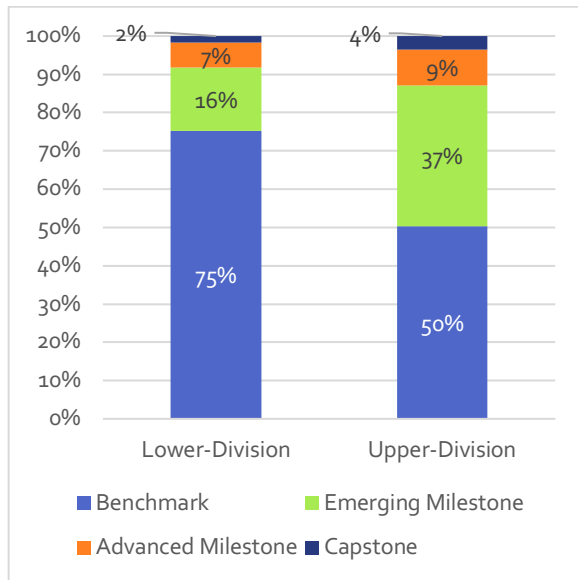
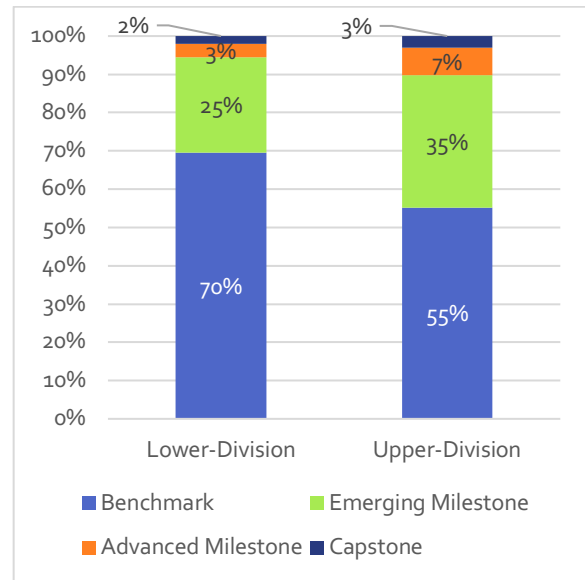


Figure 19. Global Problem Solving



Highlights from Analysis of Results

Data were analyzed to ascertain differences among courses in achieving the four learning outcomes. Comparison tests were conducted using nonparametric statistics because rubric data are ordinal; Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U , ($p < .05$) was used when analyzing differences between two student groups or courses, and Independent-Samples Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to analyze differences across three or more student groups or courses. Significant findings ($p < .05$) are noted below.

- While samples are not expected to show evidence of all four learning outcomes, the percentage of aggregate “no evidence” ratings for each outcome is notably high (35.5 - 52.7%) (see Figure 14). Additionally, fifty-five samples showed no evidence of any of the four learning outcomes.
- The two outcomes most in evidence in the samples were **Diverse Perspectives** and **Understanding Global Systems**.
- When the outcome was in evidence, more than half to two-thirds of samples were rated at the Benchmark level.
- When samples were disaggregated between lower- and upper-division courses, results show that samples from upper-division courses performed higher on all of the learning outcomes, when the outcome was in evidence (see Figures 16-19).

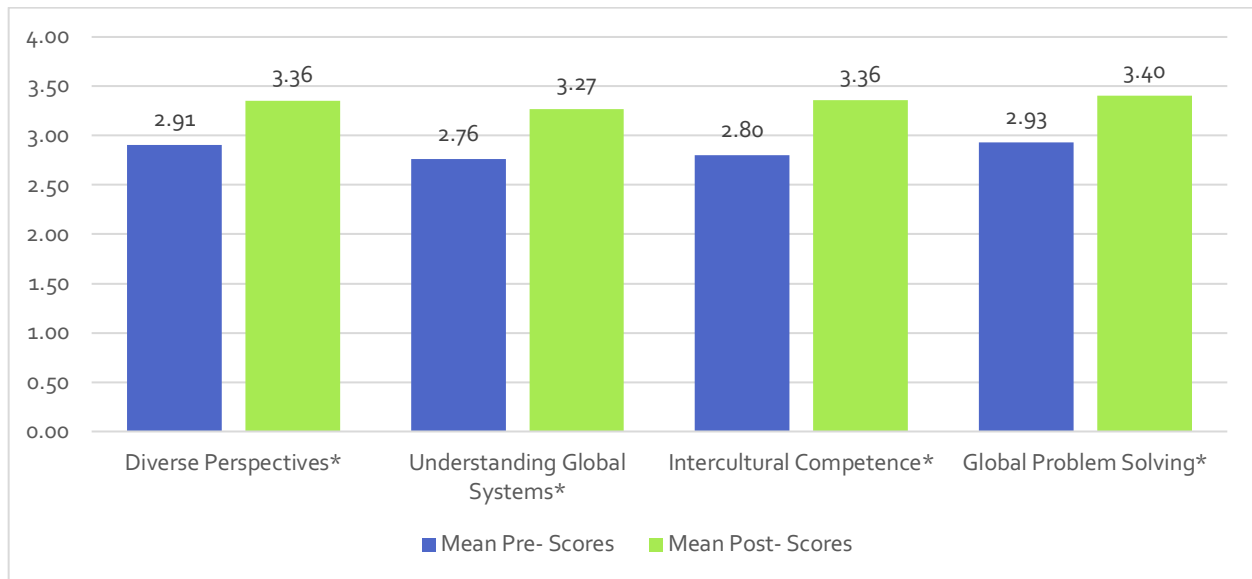
The three courses with the most samples in the assessment (BUS 200, $n=112$; GCH 205, $n=65$; GLOA 101, $n=64$) were compared. There were significant differences on outcomes 1 and 4.

- **Diverse Perspectives.** GLOA 101 samples were rated higher than BUS 200 and GCH 205 when the outcome was in evidence. There were no differences between BUS 200 and GCH 205.
- **Understanding Global Systems.** There were no differences among the courses when the outcome was in evidence.
- **Intercultural Competence.** There was no evidence of this outcome in BUS 200 samples; there was no difference between GCH 205 and GLOA 101.
- **Global Problem Solving.** GCH 205 samples were rated higher than BUS 200 and GLOA 101.

Student Self-Assessment

All students who were enrolled in a Global Understanding course during the assessment period received an online self-assessment survey at the end of the semester. The retrospective pre-post self-assessment asked students to rate their knowledge and skills on six learning outcomes at the beginning of the semester (pre), and then again at the end of the semester (post). In total, 498 students completed both the pre and post items, resulting in a 10.2% response rate. A t-test pairwise comparison showed significant perceived learning gains on all six outcomes (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Mean Scores on Student Learning Self-Assessment



Mean scores, self-reported on a scale of 1-4, n=498, $p < .05$

How do the Results Meet Expectations?

How to assess learning in Global Understanding?

Because this was the first time that Mason used this rubric to assess student work, these data provide baseline information. Given that 71% of students take a Global Understanding course at the lower-division level, it is unsurprising that their work samples were rated at the lower levels of the rubric. Also, faculty offered that an upper-division course number does not necessarily signal a higher level of performance for these particular learning outcomes; for instance, a student taking MUSI 431 may have extensive experience in music but understanding global systems may be novel. Indeed, we may expect higher performance from students who have substantive curricular or co-curricular experiences in these areas.

Does the rubric work? The learning outcomes for this category are defined as broad statements that represent complex fields of scholarship and pedagogy. The current courses in the Global Understanding category span a wide array of content across the disciplines at Mason, from International Business to Religions of Asia to Bollywood Dance. While the rubric is a valid explication of the broad learning outcomes, it does not adequately delineate the complexities of learning within each of those broad outcomes. For example, AAC&U offers distinct rubrics for Global Learning (2014), Intercultural Knowledge and Competence (2009), and Problem-Solving (2009). Thus, while Mason's rubric provides a broad scope, it does not appear adequate to measure the complex learning tasks across this diverse course selection.

How are Results Being Used to Improve Students' Educational Experience?

A series of open meetings (including an online option) were held in February 2018 to share results. Faculty participants expressed concern that there seems to be a misalignment of the Global Understanding category, outcomes, and courses. While the courses vary widely in content and focus, the category's learning outcomes and rubric reflect only certain kinds of course content; that is, content that is mainly situated in the present, that is transnational or transregional, and comparative. It was agreed that the university does not provide a common definition of "global," which may be partly responsible for the misalignment. Faculty generally agreed that changes are needed: either the courses need to be better aligned to the outcomes, or the category should be changed to better reflect the student and faculty experience.

Faculty participants offered a few suggestions about how to move forward with making changes to the Global Understanding category. One suggestion was to consider adopting principles from the "non-western culture" course requirement⁵ from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Faculty participants noted that course instruction should leverage Mason's diverse student population and build assignments that allow students to relate to and learn from each other's life experiences; some suggested that this may help enhance students'

⁵ <https://chss.gmu.edu/general-education/non-western-culture>

intercultural competence. In the rubric working group, faculty advocated for flexibility so that outcomes could be appropriately defined for the discipline in which the course is being taught. For instance, the concept of self-awareness may not be an appropriate outcome for a discipline such as Economics, but for others, like Anthropology, positionality is central.

In a collaborative project with doctoral students in Mason's Higher Education program, Dooris, J., Ford, M., Klein, C., Lebrón, J., & Shaw, K. (2015, December) surveyed the landscape of global learning concepts in higher education. They identified three distinct aims for global learning, each with its own set of learning outcomes:

- **International:** the in-depth study of another nation, culture, society, or people, past or present which provides an understanding through political, social, historical, cultural, artistic, literary, geographic and/or economic contexts.
- **Intercultural:** the diversity of social identity, values, beliefs or customs within or outside of United States with a focus on the skills necessary to act appropriately in intercultural situations.
- **Global:** the interconnectedness of cultures and societies through interdisciplinary examination of global problems or issues.

Dooris et. al. recommended that these three aims cannot be accomplished at any level in a single general education course, but that students should be provided with curricular and high impact co-curricular experiences that support them to develop this comprehensive set of outcomes.

Assessment Rubric(s)

The **Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Global Understanding** was developed by a team of Mason faculty who teach Global Understanding courses. The rubric was adapted from the AAC&U Global Learning VALUE rubric (2014) and was informed by the Measuring College Learning Project (Calder & Steffes, 2016). The rubric is designed to evaluate student performance on four broad learning outcomes, with four increasingly sophisticated performance descriptors for each outcome. The rubric can be used with many types of student work. Most student work will not show evidence of all four outcomes; in this case, an additional category for "no evidence" should be made available.

Courses Approved for Mason Core Global Understanding Category

ANTH 302: Peoples/Cultures Latin Amer
ANTH 308: Peoples/Culture of Middle East
ANTH 309: Peoples and Cultures of India
ANTH 312: Political Anthropology
ANTH 313: Myth, Magic and Mind
ANTH 331: Refugees
ANTH 332: Cultures Comparative Perspective
ANTH 382: Urban Anthropology
ARTH 319: Art of Ancient Near East
ARTH 320: Art of the Islamic World
ARTH 380: African Art
ARTH 382: Arts of India
ARTH 383: Arts of Southeast Asia
ARTH 384: Arts of China
ARTH 386: The Silk Road
BUS 200: Global Environment of Business
CEIE 100: Environmental Eng Around World
CEIE 497: Applied Engineering Abroad
COMM 305: Foundations Intercultural Comm
CONF 340: Global Conflict Analysis/Resol
CRIM 405: Law and Justice Around World
DANC 118: World Dance
DANC 418: Global Dance Intensive
ECON 360: Economics of Developing Areas
ECON 361: Econ Developmt Latin Amer
ECON 362: African Economic Development
ECON 380: Economies in Transition
ECON 390: International Economics
ENGH 362: Global Voices
FAVS 300: Global Horror Film

FRLN 331: Topics in World Cinema
GCH 205: Global Health
GGS 101: Major World Regions
GLOA 101: Intro to Global Affairs
GOVT 132: Intro International Poli
GOVT 133: Intro Comparative Politics
GOVT 364: Public Policy Making
HIST 202: Fresh/Soph Sem in Global Hist
HIST 251: Survey of East Asian Civ
HIST 252: Survey of East Asian History
HIST 261: Survey of African History
HIST 262: Survey of African History
HIST 271: Survey Latin Amer Hist
HIST 272: Survey Latin American History
HIST 281: Surv of Middle Eastern Civiliz
HIST 282: Survey of Mid East Civilizatio
HIST 328: Rise of Russia
HIST 329: Modern Russia and Soviet Union
HIST 356: Modern Japan
HIST 357: Postwar Japan: 1945-Pres
HIST 358: Post - 1949 China
HIST 360: History of South Africa
HIST 364: Revol/Radical Politics-Lat Am
HIST 365: Conquest/Colonztn-Lat Am
HIST 384: Global History of Christianity
HIST 387: Topics in Global History
HIST 460: Modern Iran
HIST 462: Women in Islamic Society
INTS 303: Intro to International Studies
INYO 105: American Cultures

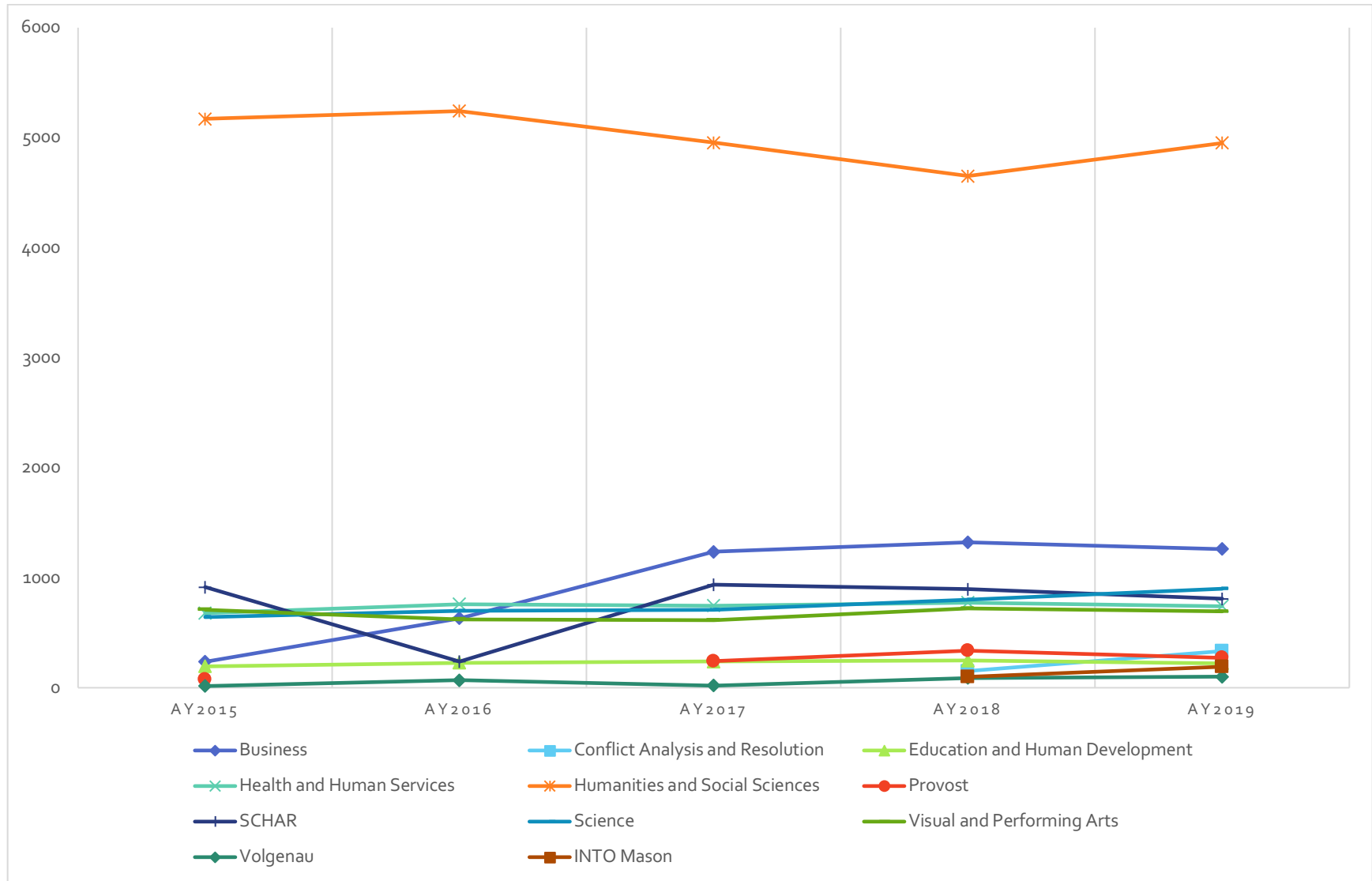
JAPA 310: Japanese Cult in a Global Wrld
MBUS 305: Intro International Business
ME 497: Applied Engineering Abroad
MSOM 305: Managing in a Global Economy
MUSI 103: Musics of the World
MUSI 431: Music History in Society III
NCLC 102: Global Netwrks and Communities
PHIL 243: Global Environmental Ethics
PROV 105: American Cultures
PROV 150: Int'l Exp: Global Understanding
PSYC 379: Applied Cross-Cultur Psy
RELI 100: Human Relig Experience
RELI 211: Religions of the West
RELI 212: Religions of Asia
RELI 313: Hinduism
RELI 315: Buddhism

RELI 320: Religion/Revolution Latin Amer
RELI 341: Spirituality and Healing
RELI 374: Islamic Thought
RELI 384: Global History of Christianity
RUSS 354: Cntmpry Post-Soviet Life
SOC1 120: Globalization and Society
SOC1 320: Social Structure and Globaliza
SOC1 332: The Urban World
SPAN 322: Intro Latin Amer Culture
SPAN 466: Latin Am Civ and Culture
SYST 202: Eng Systems in Complex World
SYST 497: Applied Engineering Abroad
THR 359: World Stages
TOUR 210: Glob Underst-Travel/Tour
WMST 100: Global Reps of Women

Table 12. Enrollment in Mason Core Global Understanding Courses, AY2015-19

| | AY2015 | | AY2016 | | AY2017 | | AY2018 | | AY2019 | |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| | #Sections | Enroll | #Sections | Enroll | #Sections | Enroll | #Sections | Enroll | #Sections | Enroll |
| Business | 6 | 236 | 20 | 631 | 39 | 1,236 | 42 | 1,322 | 42 | 1,262 |
| Conflict Analysis and Resolution | | | | | | | 5 | 152 | 15 | 333 |
| Education and Human Development | 5 | 194 | 9 | 227 | 9 | 239 | 10 | 248 | 10 | 222 |
| Health and Human Services | 18 | 678 | 19 | 759 | 19 | 746 | 19 | 773 | 20 | 742 |
| Humanities and Social Sciences | 171 | 5,171 | 172 | 5,242 | 161 | 4,954 | 155 | 4,652 | 162 | 4,952 |
| Provost | 6 | 74 | | | 15 | 242 | 8 | 337 | 3 | 273 |
| SCHAR | 11 | 915 | 13 | 238 | 12 | 937 | 13 | 895 | 12 | 808 |
| Science | 11 | 642 | 11 | 697 | 11 | 707 | 16 | 798 | 14 | 900 |
| Visual and Performing Arts | 23 | 709 | 24 | 622 | 22 | 614 | 26 | 721 | 27 | 694 |
| Volgenau | 1 | 15 | 2 | 69 | 1 | 20 | 2 | 90 | 6 | 101 |
| INTO Mason | | | | | | | 7 | 99 | 12 | 191 |
| TOTAL | 252 | 8,634 | 270 | 8,485 | 289 | 9,695 | 303 | 10,087 | 323 | 10,478 |

Figure 21. Five-Year Enrollment Trends in Global Understanding Courses, AY2015-19



Mason Core Rubric for Evaluating Student Work in Global Understanding

This rubric was developed by a team of faculty experts to evaluate student work for the Mason Core learning outcomes in Global Understanding. The rubric was adapted from the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics for Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge and Competence. For more information about the learning outcomes and approved courses, <http://masoncore.gmu.edu/global-understanding-2/>

How to use this rubric: This rubric is designed to evaluate student performance on four learning outcomes, with four increasingly sophisticated performance descriptors for each outcome. This rubric can be used with many types of written work. Most student work will not show evidence of all four outcomes; in this case, an additional category for “no evidence” should be made available.

| Student Learning Outcomes | Level of Performance | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| | Capstone | Advanced Milestone | Emerging Milestone | Benchmark |
| Understanding One’s Own and Others’ Perspectives | Evaluates and applies diverse perspectives to complex questions that reflect multiple perspectives or worldviews; evaluates one’s own position in the analysis and acknowledges conflicts | Synthesizes diverse perspectives and asks increasingly complex questions about other worldviews; shows a growing understanding of one’s own perspective | Draws connections and distinctions between diverse perspectives or worldviews; shows some awareness of own perspective | Identifies at least one perspective beyond one’s own, but describes the experience of self or others primarily through one cultural perspective or worldview |
| Understanding Global Systems | Analyzes the ways in which patterns and processes of globalization make visible the interconnections, differences, and evolution of human societies | Examines major elements of global systems, and connects interactions and exchanges among societies with broader patterns and processes of globalization | Identifies major elements of global systems, and begins to recognize patterns and processes within interactions and exchanges among societies | Identifies the basic role of institutions, interactions, and exchange among societies |
| Intercultural Competence | Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of other cultures; synthesizes knowledge and experience to ask complex questions about other cultures | Demonstrates advanced understanding of elements important to members of another culture; asks deeper questions about other cultures | Examines elements important to members of another culture; asks increasingly complex questions about other cultures | Identifies and describes elements important to members of another culture (in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices) |
| Global Problem Solving | Synthesizes knowledge and skills into sophisticated, appropriate, and workable solutions to address complex global problems using interdisciplinary perspectives | Plans and evaluates more complex solutions to global challenges that are appropriate to their contexts using interdisciplinary perspectives (ie. cultural, historical, scientific) | Formulates practical yet elementary solutions to global challenges using disciplinary perspectives (ie. cultural, historical, scientific) | Defines global challenges in basic ways, including limited perspectives and solutions. |