Renaissance College
Learning and Leadership Outcomes
Guide

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Outcomes-Based Learning for Leadership Development ................................................................. 4  
Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 4  
Purpose .......................................................................................................................................... 4  
The Six Renaissance College Outcomes .......................................................................................... 4  
How Students Use the Outcomes .................................................................................................. 5  
Initiating a Dialogue on Outcomes: Each Student Must Determine What it Means to be an Educated Leader ................................................................. 6  
Evaluating Outcomes Mastery ...................................................................................................... 7  
Renaissance College Outcomes and Course Content ..................................................................... 7  

Learning Outcomes ....................................................................................................................... 8  

Knowing Self and Others ............................................................................................................. 8  
Background: .................................................................................................................................. 8  
Description ................................................................................................................................... 9  
Dimensions .................................................................................................................................... 10  
Learning Indicators ....................................................................................................................... 11  
Suggested Readings ....................................................................................................................... 12  
References .................................................................................................................................... 12  

Personal Well-Being ..................................................................................................................... 14  
Background: .................................................................................................................................. 14  
Description ................................................................................................................................... 14  
Dimensions .................................................................................................................................... 15  
Learning Indicators ....................................................................................................................... 15  
References: ..................................................................................................................................... 16  

Multi-Literacy ................................................................................................................................. 17  
Background: .................................................................................................................................. 17  
Description ................................................................................................................................... 17  
Dimensions .................................................................................................................................... 18  
Learning Indicators ....................................................................................................................... 19  
References: ..................................................................................................................................... 20  

Problem-Solving ............................................................................................................................. 21  
Background: .................................................................................................................................. 21  
Description ................................................................................................................................... 22  

References: ..................................................................................................................................... 22
Dimensions ..................................................................................................................... 22
Learning Indicators ......................................................................................................... 23
References: ...................................................................................................................... 24

Social Interaction .................................................................................................................. 25
Background .......................................................................................................................... 25
Description ............................................................................................................................ 26
Dimensions ............................................................................................................................ 27
Learning indicators .............................................................................................................. 28
References ............................................................................................................................. 29

Effective Citizenship ............................................................................................................ 29
Background: .......................................................................................................................... 29
Description ................................................................................................................................ 31
Dimensions: .......................................................................................................................... 32
Learning indicators: .............................................................................................................. 33
References ............................................................................................................................. 33
Outcomes-Based Learning for Leadership Development

Introduction

This document specifies the outcomes in which students engaged in the interdisciplinary leadership program offered by Renaissance College are required to demonstrate growth and competency related to their own education and development as leaders throughout their program. While it provides specific direction, it is intended as dialogic rather than as a final, rigid “product.” The outcomes are based on particular research-based conceptual frameworks, but students are not required to limit themselves to the specifics or the frameworks, should they so choose other well-founded approaches.

The writing of this document is a collaborative effort by several authors, editors and of the Renaissance College Council.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to clearly set forth the anticipated outcomes of an interdisciplinary education in the Bachelor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Leadership Studies program. The outcomes express recognition of the need for leadership in a world marked by change, diversity, and challenges. Because the notion of leadership is both multifaceted and context-dependent, it can be understood as more than the sum of its parts. Contrary to what one might expect, there is no specific leadership outcome. Rather, leadership is interwoven into critical aspects of the outcomes contained in this document. In the course of their studies, students will learn about various leadership models as well as create their own conceptual models of leadership. Leadership is, in effect, a meta-outcome, resulting from the integration of the six learning outcomes.

The Six Renaissance College Outcomes

Six learning outcomes are separately articulated in this document. These outcomes are integral to the unique style of education at Renaissance College, which exemplifies the vigorous relationship between knowledge and ability in the learning process. There is a constant synergy fostered among all facets of knowing (affective, cognitive, and practical) that enables students to integrate various disciplines and experiences into their
Learning. This ability to integrate enables students to carry out tasks that engage multiple outcomes in a variety of contexts: Renaissance College courses, other UNB courses, co-curricular activities, and their personal lives. The main outcome areas are:

1. Knowing self and others
2. Personal well-being
3. Multi-literacy
4. Problem-solving
5. Social interaction
6. Effective citizenship

The outcomes information is made up of the following components:

1. Outcome Background
2. Outcome Description
3. Outcome Dimensions (major aspects)
4. Learning Indicators (criteria that indicate what students will know and be able to do)

**How Students Use the Outcomes**

Students are required each year to show evidence of growth and competency in each outcome. In all three years, a student’s learning portfolio gives a description of each outcome and provides descriptions, explanations and evidence of growth and competency for each one. In other words, the learning portfolio tells a compelling story of the student’s leadership development journey based on the learning outcomes framework. Year Three students will also do a presentation to faculty and students, based on their cumulative portfolio that demonstrates the evidence of growth over their entire time at Renaissance College. There is a portfolio integration course each year to provide direction and support for portfolio creation and refinement, and the student’s portfolio is submitted in several stages. Feedback is provided at each stage for integration into future submissions.
Students are expected to use the outcome descriptions as a foundation in first year and over the next two years to craft their own descriptions of each outcome. The criteria specified in the learning indicators for each outcome dimension are to be used as a guide to collate evidence of academic, social and personal growth and competency in that outcome.

These outcomes will not be achieved simultaneously or in a linear fashion. Instead they will manifest differently in each student due to the highly individual process of interdisciplinary learning. While learning is a process, the nature of that process is unique to each individual, and not achieved by applying an external “formula for success.” Rather, deep learning and meaningful growth emerge as students interact with concepts and struggle with how to apply them. This may take students to the edge of or outside their comfort zones, which may create some anxiety, but be assured, based on years of experience implementing this program, that the anxiety is temporary. Things worth doing are challenging and unsettling, but are far outweighed in retrospect by the value of the learning, skills and abilities developed.

*Initiating a Dialogue on Outcomes: Each Student Must Determine What it Means to be an Educated Leader*

It is critical that the philosophy, program, and procedures of Renaissance College are broadly accessible to students, to the university community at large, and to the various communities in which students and graduates practice leadership skills. The defining signature of the RC program joins the twinned notions of interdisciplinary education and leadership, and it is this intertwined relationship that is reflected in the learning outcomes.

We regard this set of outcome descriptions as representing a provisional understanding of what it means to be an educated leader. Hopefully this provides support and clarity for everyone involved in the enterprise, but also initiates a scholarly conversation in which students, faculty, and the entire university community explore how outcomes can be simultaneously expressed and assessed by students and faculty. This ongoing dialogue will also contribute to a more refined understanding of how an outcomes-
based education can be flexibly linked to the particular abilities, interests, and goals of our students.

**Evaluating Outcomes Mastery**

The learning outcomes represent a set of standards established by Renaissance College for its student body. We believe that assessment is most useful when it reflects the reality that learning is an ongoing process that is unique to each individual student. Accordingly, we offer the following commitments to outcomes-based evaluation:

1. Students will have opportunities to assess their own performance throughout their program to help them deepen their understanding of the outcomes and to assume ownership for their own learning;
2. Faculty will assess student progress in multiple contexts and in ways that enhance students’ understanding of the inter-relational character of outcomes;
3. Assessment practices will be critically reviewed at appropriate intervals by faculty and faculty teams, students, and independent evaluators.

**Renaissance College Outcomes and Course Content**

The six outcomes that outline personal and leadership growth and development do not specify any particular course content. This is because students master the Renaissance College outcomes by working with the content of whatever courses they have chosen for their programs. Renaissance College course syllabi will collectively refer to all of the outcomes described in this document, yet each course syllabus will also have other, course-specific outcomes delineated in addition. Furthermore, courses taken from other faculties and departments are unlikely to mention Renaissance College outcomes but will typically have learning outcomes, learning objectives, or content topic listings that relate to the body of theory and knowledge for that discipline. Nonetheless, the Renaissance College student approach is the same in all courses, whether or not it is laid out explicitly in course syllabi: it is by working with the content in these courses that growth and competency in Renaissance College outcomes is developed, evidence of which will be required in students’ annual
Learning Outcomes

The descriptions of learning outcomes that follow are intended to summarize a complex blending of knowledge, skills, competencies, and qualities that each individual carries into the educational environment. These outcomes are multi-dimensional capacities that will be exercised across a broad spectrum of disciplines and within various pragmatic contexts.

Knowing Self and Others

Background:

Knowing self and others is a process of learning who we are as human beings. It is an integrative outcome as it draws on various disciplines, traditions and approaches. As a foundational and multi-dimensional outcome it has to do with and draws from the beliefs, values, behaviours and abilities of the self and other.

Knowing self and others lies at the foundation of leadership. Leadership requires an in depth understanding of the self. A credible leader must gain understanding of the values, beliefs, and assumptions that drive him or her (Kouzes and Posner, 2002). Leadership also requires an enhanced understanding of the other. World-renown leaders recognize, based on their awareness and understanding of others, that differing sets of beliefs, values and principles can lead to common endeavours but also to hostile oppositions (Valk, 2013). Lastly, leadership requires an understanding of broader worldview traditions and perspectives, and their impact and influence on individuals, communities, societies and cultures (Valk et al., 2011).

Knowing Self and Others plays out over a lifetime of endeavour due to its depth and
complexity (McKenzie, 1991). We discover more about ourselves in response to our interaction with others and with the world around us (Valk, 2009a). Students at Renaissance College will have ample opportunities and support for exploring self and others in the context of their academic program and extra-curricular activities (Valk, 2009b).

Description

Knowing Self and Others has the goal of increasing students’ knowledge and awareness of various worldviews, beliefs, values, and principles. Various disciplinary frameworks will assist in understanding the complexity of the human (Valk, 2007).

Knowing Self and Others also has as a goal the pursuit of truth, meaning, and wisdom through discourse and engagement with others, through developing self-knowledge, and through critical self-reflection (Parks, 2000). As a result, we will also get in touch with who we are, with our convictions, with a sense of the meaning and purpose of life in order to achieve integrity and congruency in our lives (Palmer, 1983).

The self is that complexity of the physical, social, cultural, emotional, intellectual, political, moral, and spiritual, with an intricate mix of beliefs and values, thoughts and actions (Smith 2003). The self is subjective, self-conscious, self-reflective, and affected by an outward exploration of family, community, and more (Smith, 2010).

Others can be of many types, and are those who impact, shape and influence our worldview (Taylor, 1989). Others can be consciously or unconsciously constructed and therefore also projected. Others can be entities, institutions, or collectivized groups. The “Other” can also be a “Metaphysical Other”: transcendent God, immanent spirit, divine mystery, benevolent force, creative power, or ultimate hope (Needleman, 2009).
Knowing self and others is linked to worldviews. Worldviews are comprehensive frameworks of understanding (Naugle, 2002). They are glasses or filters, mental models and big pictures to assist individuals and groups to understand and make sense of the world in which they live (Sunshine, 2009). Worldviews are visions of life and ways of life – which can be religious, spiritual or secular (Valk, 2010). They serve as moorings or anchors for individuals and groups, giving life meaning, purpose, and direction (Taylor, 2007). Worldviews can be broadly categorized, individually embraced and collectively held (Smart, 1983).

**Dimensions**

Students at RC will be given opportunity to increase knowledge and awareness of their own beliefs, values and principles and those of others using insights gained from various disciplines. They will become familiar with worldview frameworks and types to enhance their understanding of self and others. Students will be encouraged to reflect on their own worldviews – their beliefs and values; their notions of wisdom, truth and meaning; and their experiences, traditions and spiritual practices – moving outward from there to explore other worldviews, traditions and practices particularly in the context of leadership and public policy.

Knowledge about and education in Knowing self and others can be achieved within the following three dimensions:

- Knowing self,
- Knowing others, and
- Understanding worldviews in the context of leadership and public policy.
Learning Indicators

What follows is a list of possible learning indicators revealing that a student has demonstrated growth in the three dimensions of this outcome.

a. Knowing Self
   • Describe various dimensions of the self (e.g., physical, social, cultural, political, emotional, moral, intellectual, and spiritual);
   • Describe defining personal beliefs, values, principles, preferences, attributes, skills; notions of wisdom, truth, meaning, and certainty; and trace their origins or sources;
   • Describe the processes used to identify the self: how one comes to know the self in relation to the self and others.
   • Describe personal practices and involvements (e.g., meditative, spiritual, political, cultural, social) and articulate how adherences to them deepen one’s personal worldview.

b. Knowing Others
   • Identify and describe perceptions of others; how one comes to identify and know others
   • Characterize and describe defining beliefs, values and principles of others; their notions of wisdom, truth, meaning, and certainty; and trace their origins or sources;
   • Identify and evaluate political, economic, cultural and spiritual leaders in terms of their worldviews, qualities, and process of becoming leaders;
   • Describe practices (e.g., meditative, spiritual, cultural, social) and involvements embraced by others and comprehend and articulate for oneself how adherence to those practices and involvements deepen the worldviews of others.
c. Understanding Worldviews in the context of leadership and public policy

- Distinguish between religion, spirituality and worldview;
- Identify and describe various worldview frameworks, types and sub-types;
- Describe and evaluate how worldviews impact, shape and influence social, political, cultural, environmental and spiritual beliefs and actions at the individual, communal and societal levels;
- Describe & evaluate role of leaders from various religious, spiritual or secular worldviews on major public policy issues on the local, regional, national and international level

**Suggested Readings**


**References**


Personal Well-Being

Background

Well-being, particularly in the context of living a meaningful life, has a long-standing tradition in academic disciplines like philosophy and psychology. At Renaissance College we particularly draw from the work of Viktor Frankl in the context of leadership studies (Frankl, 1984; Viktor Frankl Institute, n.d; Mengel, 2004, 2006). Furthermore, more recently the concept of Gross National Happiness (Gross National Happiness (n.d.)) and the interdisciplinary field of happiness studies (Achor, 2010; Greater Good, n.d.; Keltner, 2009; Keltner et al., 2009; Lyubomirsky, 2007) have strongly influenced RCs discourse about well-being. Finally, international “standards” and criteria support the discussion of personal well-being in the context of comparable criteria (Roscoe, 2009; International Well-being Group, 2013).

Description

While the awareness and achievement of personal well-being constitute an ongoing process that will be in dynamic flux over the course of a lifetime, Renaissance College students will be encouraged to locate a sense of understanding and mastery in balance among the following areas of growth and development:

1. **Spiritual well-being**: seeks a deep sense of purpose and meaning for oneself within the context of actively respecting diversity of belief systems world-wide;
2. **Emotional well-being**: is concerned with cultivating self-awareness in relation to the life of feelings and developing healthy strategies for their expression;
3. **Intellectual well-being**: aims at understanding what knowledge is and how it is acquired, as well as honing creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills;
4. **Physical well-being**: strives to achieve flexibility, strength, endurance, and physical self-respect;
5. **Occupational well-being**: seeks to engage in meaningful work, contributes to a healthy
work-place environment, and invests in professional development;

6. **Social well-being**: is concerned with cultivating healthy relations with others on various levels and situating individual well-being within a social context.

Mature individuals assume responsibility for cultivating such multiple strands of well-being, recognizing that circumstance and environment play a significant role. The Renaissance College conception of personal well-being depends on recognizing how individuals influence and are influenced by the contexts in which they live. It requires a multi-dimensional practice of reflective consciousness, well-informed choice, ever deepening self-knowledge, and intentional action.

**Dimensions**

The outcome of well-being will be assessed in terms of a student’s ability to

- work within conceptual frameworks, and to
- effectively exercise self-reflection in relation to their achievement.

At minimum, students need to demonstrate their growth and competency in working with one conceptual framework and in reflecting effectively on their growth and competency within it. Relevant concepts are (personal) well-being, happiness (including Gross National Happiness), and meaningful living. The learning indicators separate relevant skills according to these criteria.

**Learning Indicators**

Working Within Frameworks:

1. Ability to analyze one’s beliefs, values, and choices within a theoretical framework for well-being;
2. Describe consequences of individual decisions in relation to this framework;
3. Conduct similar analysis for group process and decision-making.

Reflection:
1. Describe relationship between a personal well-being framework and everyday actions and identify points of rupture or conflict and strategize how to realign toward well-being;
2. Anticipate the impacts of personal actions on the well-being of others.

References:
http://www.meaning.ca/archives/archive/art_responsibility_T_Mengel.htm


Multi-Literacy

Background

A first glance ‘literacy’ would seem to be a term that everyone understands. But, literacy as a concept has proven to be both complex and dynamic, continuing to be interpreted and defined in a number of ways (Lankshear and Knoble, 2003). Notions of what it means to be literate or illiterate are influenced by factors such as academic research, institutional agendas, national context, cultural values and personal experiences. As a result, the concept of literacy has expanded from a simple process of acquiring basic cognitive skills such as reading, writing and comprehension to a more broad understanding directed toward developing the capacity for social awareness and critical reflection as a basis for personal and social change (Street, 2003). This has led to the concept of multiple literacies where terms such as information literacy, visual literacy, digital literacy, cultural literacy, etc. are included. In essence, multi-literacy is a way of ‘reading the world’ in specific contexts (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000).

Description

Multiple literacies expand the way people acquire information and understand concepts. It also allows people to examine their surroundings and to express, explore,
question, communicate and understand the flow of ideas among individuals and groups. While there is a fundamental focus on the tangible skills of reading and writing commonly considered modes of literacy, there are other modes that contribute to the multi-literacy outcome of Renaissance College. Included in, but not limited to, this expanded view are numeracy skills, oral skills, aesthetic literacy and information literacy. Numeracy refers to the ability to process, interpret and communicate numerical, quantitative, spatial, statistical and mathematical information (Coben et al., 2003). Verbal literacy focuses on the ability to communicate effectively in informal as well as more formal situations such as presentations and debates. Also included are accurate word choice, the observance of appropriate standards of grammar and usage, clarity and conciseness of expression, and the level of diction appropriate for the message and the audience. Aesthetic literacy relates to how a work looks or sounds, whether it uses elements and principles of design (in any medium) in a congruent and pleasing way and whether it is technically polished, refined and with no mistakes. It is also related to the ability to understand and make meaning from aesthetic endeavors. Broadly stated, information literacy is the ability to know when there is a need for information and to be able to identify, locate, evaluate and effectively use the information for the issue or problem at hand (Hull, 2003). Information literacy also pertains to having an understanding of the distinctions among the various types of sources and publications such as academic journals and popular magazines and private web sites and public sources.

**Dimensions**

To operate effectively within a variety of contexts the following modes of literacy are considered necessary:

- Information literacy
- Academic reading and writing
- Verbal literacy
- Numeracy
- Aesthetic literacy
Learning Indicators

Information literacy
  • Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
  • Evaluate information and its sources critically
  • Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
  • Understand the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally
  • Develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology
  • Create, critique, analyze and evaluate multimedia texts
  • Understand and attend to the ethical responsibilities required within the technology environments

Academic Reading and Writing Skills
  • Critically analyze, texts, including identification of logical structure of thesis, evaluation of evidence and appeals, and the distinction between facts and inferences
  • Create systematic, structured arguments and expositions
  • Use style and grammar appropriate to a given context
  • Prepare reports and other types of written documents for a variety of audiences and purposes
  • Change the format and style of documents to suit different contexts

Verbal Literacy
  • Use effective verbal style (e.g., demonstrate control of tone, articulation, and projection as well as control speed and avoid monotony)
• Speak extemporaneously and respond to question using active listening to shape responses
• Demonstrate appropriate posture, gestures and movements
• Conduct and control formal meetings
• Recognize norms and protocols for communication in other cultures
• Address large audiences effectively

Numeracy
• Interpret statistics, graphs and figures
• Perform basis calculations
• Base arguments on quantitative date where appropriate
• Understand and know how to develop indicators for evaluation and decision-making

Aesthetic Literacy
• Design and use multi-media techniques in presentations where appropriate
• Critique visual works in terms of elements and principles of design
• Use and array of visual, kinesthetic and aural forms of expression
• Critique and analyze the communicative power of an artistic expression within its cultural context and its influence on social and public discourse
• Critique and analyze beliefs and values pertaining to aesthetics of dominant and non-dominate cultural groups
• Select the appropriate medium for delivering a message with sensitivity to context and audience
• Demonstrate individual imagination and creativity

References:
London: Rutledge.


**Problem-Solving**

**Background**

When we think, we problem-solve. We use our cognitive abilities to mentally work through what we experience or remember, we form an opinion, and we make decisions on how to act or react in a given situation and context (Newell & Simon, 1976; Mayer, 1992; Novick & Bassok, 2005; Sternberg & Frensch, 1991). Problems in this general context simply are mental tasks that we need to perform; for example, process information, remember, judge, and decide.

When we lead, we problem-solve. We use our leadership abilities to involve others in processes that require thinking, decision-making, and acting (Northouse, 2016). Problems in this leadership context are leadership tasks including understanding what is and why; determining what might be and how to get there; decision-making about options in the light of values and different implications; and leading and engaging in the necessary change processes.
When we do, manage or lead projects (Mengel, 2012) we problem-solve (Hayes, 1980; Fantin, 2014; Dwyer, Stanton & Thiessen, 2004; Project Management Institute, 2012; Thomas & Mengel, 2014). We use our thinking and leadership abilities to engage in, organize, and lead initiatives that address particularly complex challenges. Problems in this context often present themselves as interdependent and interrelated tasks that need to be organized, thought through, and addressed in cooperation with others and by applying systematic, yet innovative and flexible approaches to problem-solving.

**Description**

Problems that leaders may face do exist at various levels of complexity. In order to develop a repertoire of creative solutions to analytical, interactive, and design problems at different levels of complexity, structured problem-solving procedures need to be applied in the context of disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge. In particular, students will be introduced to a generic process of structured problem-solving with the following five main components serving as a basic approach: identification of personal decision-making process, problem definition, solution strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Further approaches to problem-solving (e.g., project management, design thinking), researching relevant information, accessing resources, identifying constraints, and to assessing solutions using criteria consistent with problem definition will add to a well-rounded competency in this outcome. Finally, connections to be made between personal values and cultural sources inform the decision-making aspect of problem-solving; this requires the capacity to uncover and analyze one’s own and others’ assumptions and determine their impact on potential solutions.

**Dimensions**

1. Identification of appropriate problem-solving approach
2. Problem Definition
3. Solution Formulation
4. Implementation

5. Monitor and Evaluate Solution

6. Project Management and leadership

**Learning Indicators**

The following provides a list of the skills students need to demonstrate at minimum, entailed by the six dimensions of problem-solving; the demonstration of proficiency should include problems of different levels of complexity and appropriate approaches to problem-solving:

1. Articulate an understanding of potentially divergent values in the context of problem-solving
2. Employ problem-solving techniques to situations where personal values clash with others’ and/or organizational policies
3. Provide precise descriptions of problems and solution constraints, as well as identify problem-solving objectives and necessary resources
4. Clearly define key terms and issues for clarity of communication with fellow problem-solvers
5. Demonstrate flexibility in problem definition relative to group and/or community objectives
6. Facilitate understanding and acceptance of negotiated problem definition with group
7. Use brainstorming and other creative strategies to flush out a range of potential solutions
8. Identify criteria, select feasible solution based on values, and predict performance
9. Produce a plan for implementation
10. Carry out a competent implementation plan in a collaborative manner
11. Recognize and deal with impediments by leading team efforts and linking skills
12. Assess how personal skills and knowledge affect implementation
13. Monitor the implementation of the solution effectively
14. Predict how individual and group assumptions may impact on solutions
15. Evaluate solution from multiple perspectives
16. Link monitoring to problem definition and solution formulation

In addition, students are advised to demonstrate growth and competency in the application of the following project management process groups:

1. Initiating a project,
2. Planning a project,
3. Executing a project,
4. Monitoring and controlling a project, and
5. Closing a project.

References:


24
Social Interaction

Background

In its most basic form, social interaction is the intentional or unintentional exchange of social meaning between two or more people. Effective social interaction is the driving force of any cohesive group, from the very small to the very large, and is what makes “community” possible.

Different social settings (e.g., work meeting, sports competition, family dinner, etc.) require people to engage in different forms of social interaction. Each of these contexts requires us to behave and communicate in different ways because in each we act as a member of a different group, with different internal norms and different objectives.

Social interaction requires understanding the different social roles that individuals play, as well as the particular expectations that attach to membership in various groups. For example, some groups, such as families and friends, fulfill their purpose simply by maintaining supportive and enduring relationships between members; while others, such as clubs and professional associations, are formally organized and driven by common goals and
experiences (Cooley, 1909). In a renowned study of group dynamics, Erving Goffman (1950) suggested that social interaction is not unlike a theatrical performance: if we wish to be included in groups, we learn to “act” the “part” that we and others think we should play. New members of groups learn how to “act” informally from older, established group members, and this transfer of knowledge is essential to keeping groups together over time (Becker, 1963).

Most of the time, social interaction appears to us as a series of (often unspoken) rules and patterns of activity that we feel compelled to follow (for example, observing rules of conduct during business meetings, or waiting in line at the store). However, as Anthony Giddens (1984) has highlighted, these rules and patterns are only there because people are continually acting them out. Our interactions make the rules, as much as they follow them. This means that, while there is pressure to conform to social conventions, there is also possibility to alter them by targeting problematic norms and patterns. Thus, understanding groups, individuals and social interaction is also the key to any attempt to effect social change.

**Description**

Ease and flexibility of social interaction are characteristics of good leadership, whether they are exercised in formal work groups, personal or professional relationships. These characteristics can be developed by growing our experience with interaction in a wide variety of social and cultural settings, and by carefully examining this experience so as to draw lessons about successful and respectful communication and behavioural strategies.

While social interaction is complex and highly diverse, for the purpose of assessing this learning outcome we distinguish three different types of interaction situations (Alverno College, 1994). The first is interpersonal, one-on-one interaction, in which two individuals work together on a problem related to their professional relationship or other common activities. The second type of social interaction occurs in task-oriented ‘convergent’ groups –
that is, groups whose members have convergent ideas or goals, and who have a shared, concrete problem to solve. The third type of social interaction is that which is common in ‘divergent’ groups. In this type of setting the focus is on the exploration of different ideas, points of view and analytical perspectives, so as to develop an in-depth understanding of an issue. All three of these types of situations can result in collaborative or conflictual social interactions.

Successful and productive social interaction relies on reciprocity and the shared efforts of those involved. Features of effective social interaction include: awareness and sensitivity to cultural context; gauging situational constraints and opportunities accurately; assessing and adapting to group dynamics during interaction; responding constructively to disagreement and pre-empting strife; thinking critically, yet also pragmatically, about one’s own role in the group; managing one’s behaviour appropriately to the context; approaching interaction in a responsible and ethical way; understanding, and being understood by others.

Corresponding to these features are a variety of interpretation and communication skills that students can develop through their class-based and experiential learning endeavours. These are skills such as: astute observation of oneself and others, active and empathetic listening, “reading” social cues, identifying participants’ expectations, identifying relevant cultural and group norms applicable to a given social interaction, recognizing and appreciating difference, learning from alternative points of view, and expressing ideas and intentions clearly. All of these skills and abilities contribute to developing a fully rounded individual who is both confident and competent in their social engagement with others.

**Dimensions**

The ability to engage with other people in a reflexive and considerate manner is a core skill that, once developed, empowers individuals to participate effectively in any social situation. There are four dimensions in which individuals can enhance their social interaction
abilities:

• Developing foundational interaction skills (such as listening, observing, articulating)
• Assessing group dynamics and roles (including one’s own)
• Acting and communicating appropriately to social context
• Managing obstacles and conflict

**Learning indicators**

Students’ growth and competency in the four dimensions of this learning outcome will be gauged on the basis of multiple indicators, including:

1. Demonstrates ability to listen to others without pre-judgement and accurately interpret their meaning and intent.
2. Continuously improves communication skills and the ability to convey one’s ideas and intentions in a clear and eloquent way.
3. Demonstrates ability to adapt one’s interaction style to different social and cultural contexts.
4. Demonstrates ability to navigate relevant norms and expectations in complex social situations.
5. Extrapolates from experience those behaviours that help and those that hinder task achievement within a group
6. Critically evaluates the structure and interaction process in one’s group; identifies possible modifications and improvements.
7. Identifies and critically analyzes the function of different roles within the group.
8. Assesses, compares and improves one’s performance in different types of social interaction settings.
9. Develops strategies to respond constructively to disagreement.

10. Analyzes one’s conflict behaviours in relation to different types of groups and social interactions.

11. Proposes and/or implements realistic approaches for particular conflict resolution situations.

References

Alverno College (1994). Teaching Social Interaction at Alverno College, Alverno College Institute, Milwaukee, WI


Effective Citizenship

Background:
Renaissance College recognizes that “terms such as ‘citizen’ and ‘citizenship’ are neither stable nor limited to a single definition” (O’Shea, 2003, p.8). On the most common understanding, citizenship denotes a legal and political status in a particular state. “A citizen is a member of a political community who enjoys the rights and assumes the duties of membership” (Leydet, 2011). More specifically, citizenship bestows the full set of civil rights (such as freedom of expression, freedom of association, etc.), political rights (such as the right to vote and run for office) and social rights (such as a right to basic education and health care) that exist within a given state; and also imposes the full set of duties associated with membership, such as obeying the law, paying taxes, serving on juries or in the military.

Following most contemporary scholars, however, we adopt a broader interpretation of citizenship, treating it not only as a status but also as a role. From this perspective, a citizen is not only a rights-holder but also a social agent - a member of a political community who
participates together with others in setting the terms of social cooperation and shaping the conditions of collective life (see Bellamy, 2008; Heater, 2013).

Citizenship is sometimes thought of as a synonym for national identity and a sense of belonging to one’s country. However, our broader conception of citizenship encompasses the idea that citizens are usually members of several overlapping but distinct communities at the local, regional, national and even international level. For example, a Canadian citizen could be actively engaged not only in Canadian affairs at the federal level, but also as a resident of Fredericton or Montreal, a resident of New Brunswick or Quebec, a member of the Maliseet or Cree First Nations, etc. (Kmylicka & Norman, 2000).

The boundaries of political communities are not obvious or easy to define. While citizenship rights can only be exercised within the territory of the state(s) one is a member of, economic, social and cultural relationships between people span across borders. Moreover, in the age of globalization even communities far-removed from each other can become interdependent. For this reason, many have argued that citizenship has a cosmopolitan dimension – i.e., that we are all members of a global community, with strong ethical responsibilities to distant others as well as to our own compatriots (Scheffler, 2001; Appiah, 2006; Vernon, 2010). Furthermore, there is growing support for the idea that we should treat past and future generations with as much consideration as we give our fellow citizens in the present, thus expanding the notion of political community not only in space, but in time (Gossseries & Meyer, 2010). Still others have suggested reconceiving “community” even more widely from an ecological perspective, to encompass our relationships with the environment and other species (Kymlicka & Donaldson, 2011). There are thus many ways to envision political membership beyond its classical meaning.

While citizenship is a broad concept, it is important to note that it does not cover any and all kind of group participation and social activity. Being a citizen is not the same as being a neighbor, a co-worker, a customer or a club member. Nor is it the sum of all these social relationships. Rather, the role of “citizen” is that which creates the background conditions that shape our relationships as neighbours, workers and even family members. For example, in democratic communities citizens are able to exercise their voting rights, form associations and
unions, participate in social movements, organize campaigns, volunteer, petition, protest, advocate for social change and express their views in the public sphere. Through such forms of civic engagement citizens in some countries have been able to impose new taxes and regulations for urban development (affecting their relationships as neighbours); new safety standards, minimum wages and non-discrimination regulations (affecting their relationships as co-workers); or new norms and laws on marriage or inheritance (affecting their relationships as family members).

**Description**

‘Effective citizenship’ can take many different forms, and marshals a variety of skills, dispositions and knowledge. As the above background on the concept of citizenship suggests, effective citizenship is not a one-time accomplishment. Rather, the effective fulfillment of one’s role as a citizen implies a sustained engagement over time. This is achieved through an ongoing commitment to learn about, care for and involve oneself in community life and self-government.

First, effective citizenship requires continuously improving one’s understanding of the issues that affect one’s community and one’s ability to see those issues from multiple perspectives. This, in turn, requires building a thorough knowledge of the local, national and international forces, both material and social, which shape the community. To be able to think critically and act effectively, a citizen must have a good grasp of the economic and political structures in place, and of the basic mechanisms through which decisions are made, and authority and wealth are distributed. This also entails maintaining an awareness of power relations within the community and maintaining the ability to identify how different social roles, norms and identities are constructed.

Second, effective citizenship requires developing a sense of self as a social and political agent. This means being able to identify and continuously reassess: how various systemic factors affect one’s own position and identity, and what opportunities, privileges and constraints they create; how one’s actions affect other people and groups; and what role one
has in shaping the norms and structures of the community. By extension, this further includes an appreciation of the vast diversity of values, belief systems and life experiences that exist within society. Developing a sense of self as a social and political agent also means reflecting on one’s political ideals and vision for the future of the community as a whole. An effective citizen should be able think critically, yet constructively, about matters of justice, equality and democracy.

Third, effective citizenship includes engaging in public life in a meaningful and socially responsible way. Being more than spectators, effective citizens actively participate in public discourse and aim to increase each other’s knowledge and awareness of social issues, while assessing possible solutions to social problems and opportunities for civic action. Effective citizenship entails taking part in the democratic process and maximizing the opportunities it presents, while also reflecting critically on its limitations and working to make institutions more responsive to public needs. Effective citizens explore different forms of engagement in civil society and take part in organized action through community organizations, interest groups, local and international associations, social movements, etc. Finally, effective citizens think through the ethical implications and long-term consequences of their actions and the social impacts they produce on both a local and global scale.

**Dimensions:**

Based on the above description, there are three broadly defined dimensions of effective citizenship as a learning outcome:

1.  Building knowledge and awareness of the structures and processes that shape collective life
2.  Evaluating one’s role as a social and political agent and one’s vision for a better community
3.  Engaging in public life and exercising social responsibility
**Learning indicators:**

Below is a list of some of the possible learning indicators which signal that a student has demonstrated growth and competency in the dimensions of this outcome:

1. Uses concepts and theories from multiple disciplines, such as history, geography, economics, and political science, to analyze current events and articulate one’s own perspective.

2. Develops skills necessary to research a community problem, identify the main stakeholders and their positions.

3. Develops self-assessment skills and applies analytical frameworks (logical structures for classifying and organizing one’s experience) to assess one’s own social experience.

4. Masters the vocabulary of citizenship and the democratic process, and develops the ability to communicate effectively in the public sphere.

5. Applies moral reasoning to understand the ethical implications of the different courses of action (or inaction) available to address social problems.

6. Learns how to “read an organization” and how individuals work with others to achieve common goals.

7. Develops both a strategy for action and criteria for evaluating effective action plans.

8. Works effectively in the civic or professional realm and enhances the ability of others to participate.

**References**


