

# Western University

## Report of the Working Group on Western Degree Outcomes

March 30, 2016

## INTRODUCTION

### Background and Mandate

In early February, 2015 a working group of faculty, staff and students with membership from various constituencies, appointed by the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs), began to meet to explore learning outcomes at the institutional level (Western Degree Outcomes) and to develop a campus-wide consultation plan with the goal of obtaining input from faculty, staff, students and the community on Western's degree outcomes. The Working Group considered both undergraduate and graduate degree-level outcomes, but decided to focus on the development of undergraduate degree-level outcomes with the understanding that graduate degree outcomes may be brought forward for approval in the future. The Working Group developed a consultation document to assist constituencies with identifying and reflecting on the attributes of an ideal Western graduate and to ensure that the proposed Western Degree Outcomes reflect the academic priorities of all Faculties. The attributes and themes identified through consultation shaped the development of the proposed Western Degree Outcomes and the recommendations contained in this report.

### Members of the Working Group on Western Degree Outcomes

- John Doerksen, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs) (Chair)
- Mark Blaggrave, Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Science, Huron University College
- Erika Chamberlain, Associate Dean (Academic), Faculty of Law
- Debra Dawson, Director, Teaching Support Centre
- Nanda Dimitrov, Associate Director, Teaching Support Centre
- Susan Knabe, Associate Dean – Undergraduate, Faculty of Information and Media Studies
- Felix Lee, Professor, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science
- Margaret McGlynn, Assistant Dean, Graduate Affairs, Faculty of Social Science
- Linda Miller, Vice-Provost (School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies)
- Kim McPhee, Teaching and Learning Librarian, Western Libraries
- Richard Sookraj, Undergraduate Student Representative
- Tom Sutherland, Graduate Student Representative, Faculty of Science
- Bryce Traister, Chair, Department of English and Writing Studies, Faculty of Arts & Humanities
- Gavan Watson, Associate Director eLearning, Teaching Support Centre

### Resources

#### Internal Resources Consulted

- [Achieving Excellence on the World Stage - Western University's Strategic Plan](#)
- [Western's Institutional Quality Assurance Framework](#)

- [Western Guide to Curriculum Review](#)

#### External Resources Consulted

- [OCAV - Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations](#)
- [Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance - Quality Assurance Framework](#)
- [George Kuh & Peter Ewell \(2010\). The State of Learning Outcomes Assessment in the United States](#)
- [AACU – High Impact Educational Practices](#)
- [The Bologna Process – European Higher Education Area](#)

#### Internal Resources Developed

Additional resources were developed by the Working Group on Western Degree Outcomes to assist in the consultation process and to keep the campus-community informed about the Western Degree Outcomes Initiative.

The Working Group drafted the Western Degree Outcomes Consultation Document in September, 2015 to assist in the consultation with stakeholder groups. It was intended to provide a brief context for institution-level learning outcomes, to outline the Working Group's consultation plan and to provide stakeholders with additional resources, provide examples of institution-level learning outcomes with aligned program- and course-level learning outcomes and suggest themes identified by the Working Group for potential Western Degree Outcomes to encourage initial reflection and conversation.

The [Western Degree Outcomes OWL site](#) was created in February 2015 and is available to anyone with a Western username and password. The purpose of the OWL site was to inform the campus community about the Western Degree Outcomes initiative, to make public the agendas and minutes of the Working Group Meetings, to share the consultation document, to post resources on institutional-level learning outcomes and examples of institutional-level learning outcomes from Canadian and international universities, and to advertise and communicate opportunities for consultation and the open Western Degree Outcomes Town Hall event.

An email address, [learning-outcomes@uwo.ca](mailto:learning-outcomes@uwo.ca), was created in February 2015 to provide faculty, staff, students and Western community members with the opportunity to contact the Working Group on Western Degree Outcomes directly to provide feedback and ask questions about the Western Degree Outcomes initiative. The email address also provided an opportunity for stakeholders who were not able to participate in a consultation meeting or attend the open Town Hall Meeting to participate in the discussion and development of the degree outcomes. All emails received were responded to by the Chair of the Working Group on Western Degree Outcomes and all questions, comments and feedback received by email were presented at meetings of the Working Group for further discussion.

## Consultation Process

Beginning in September 2015, the Working Group on Western Degree Outcomes met with various groups across campus to solicit input and feedback on the themes identified in the Western Degree Outcomes

Consultation document and to reflect on the ideal attributes of a Western graduate. Feedback from these consultation sessions was summarized and the feedback that was received was discussed by the Working Group during their meetings and shaped the development of the draft Western Degree Outcomes.

These stakeholder groups consulted included:

- Faculty of Science, Undergraduate Instructors
- Huron University College, Educational Policy Committee
- Faculty of Health Science, Educational Policy Committee
- Faculty of Science/Medical Science, Educational Policy Committee
- Faculty of Law, Full-time Faculty Members
- Brescia University College, Educational Policy Committee
- King's University College, Educational Policy Committee
- Faculty of Social Science, Educational Policy Committee
- Faculty of Information and Media Studies, Educational Policy Committee
- Department Chairs and Directors, Graduate and Undergraduate
- Faculty of Education, Educational Policy Committee
- Faculty of Music, Educational Policy Committee
- Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Educational Policy Committee
- University Students' Council Executive Council and Student Councillors

The Working Group on Western Degree Outcomes hosted a Town Hall Meeting on Friday, November 20, 2015 in the University Community Centre. The Town Hall Meeting was promoted and advertised widely to all constituencies on campus including students, staff, faculty and alumni.

The Working Group on Western Degree Outcomes made every effort to involve students in all aspects of the consultation process. Both undergraduate and graduate student constituencies had representation on the membership of the Working Group. Student representatives were present and participated in many of the consultation sessions with Educational Policy Committees within the Faculties. The Chair of the Working Group met with the USC President and VP Internal to discuss the Western Degree Outcomes initiative and to facilitate a dedicated consultation session for USC Executive members and student councillors. The open Town Hall Meeting held November 20, 2015 was advertised and promoted to all registered Western and Affiliate College students and every effort was made to provide the opportunity for the student voice to be heard during the Town Hall Q & A and through online posting of questions, comments and suggestions of themes and outcomes on a virtual message board.

## Approval Process

This draft report of the Working Group on Western Degree Outcomes was circulated to the campus community for review and feedback in early March, 2016. Comments and suggestions were taken up by the Working Group at its meeting on March 29, 2016. The final draft of this report will be submitted to the Provost for review and to the University Senate for approval.

## THE WESTERN DEGREE OUTCOMES

Western Degree Outcomes provide a way to communicate what a degree from Western University means. Degree outcomes serve as a shared language of achievement and skills that any Western undergraduate—regardless of disciplines or degree—might use to describe the result of their years of study to a variety of audiences. One might say that Western Degree Outcomes provide a descriptive anatomy of the curricular body of Western University.

Acknowledging the wealth of learning accumulated by following a course of study, Western Degree Outcomes are a capacious group of indicators of a shared university curriculum that spans the full breadth of academic pre-professional and professional disciplines. They make explicit an inventory of academic, professional, and working world competencies that are already the implicit content of the Western University curriculum. They will provide faculty and students with a common language of academic development and application. It is hoped that today's WDOs will provide inspiration as well as guidance for program- and course-level curricular engagement and innovation in the years to come.

The provincial University Undergraduate Degree-Level Expectations (UUDLEs), which form the basis of the Council of Ontario Universities' Quality Assurance Framework, are the de facto institutional learning outcomes for all Ontario universities. Since 2011 the UUDLEs have served as Western's degree outcomes in our quality assurance process, both in cyclical program reviews and new program approvals. The Quality Assurance Framework indicates that "Each university is expected to develop its own institutional expression of the undergraduate and graduate Degree-Level Expectations and to have them applied to each academic program" (QAF, 2). Western Degree Outcomes are our institutional expression of the UUDLEs. Consequently, in Western's quality assurance process for undergraduate programs, program- and course-level learning outcomes will now align with Western Degree Outcomes.

### 1. Knowledge

**Western graduates will have developed** a sense of discovery that drives their ability to ask and frame questions, seeking to make connections that are not immediately obvious among phenomena and ideas. Western graduates will be able to explain the differences and linkages between the theories, research methods and core ideas of the disciplines they have studied, and analyze and solve problems according to the accepted methods of their field or fields. With their knowledge, graduates will have the ability to identify opportunities in their disciplines and see connections between other areas of study in order to imagine, create or produce novel solutions, works or performances.

### 2. Literacies and Interdisciplinarity

**Western graduates will be able to** use disciplinary discourse, technical language, numerical literacy or other appropriate disciplinary systems of knowledge, research methods or ways of knowing to identify, locate and evaluate oral, print, graphic, numerical, scientific or digital information. They will be able to explore complex problems from a variety of perspectives, recognizing bias, and identifying missing or underrepresented voices. Working under conditions of ambiguity or uncertainty, graduates will be able to use disciplinary knowledge in order to research, reason and solve problems from a range of contexts

relevant to practices in their disciplines. In proposing solutions, they will be able to describe limitations of the sources and methods they use.

### 3. Communication

**Western graduates will be able to** interact and collaborate effectively with other individuals and groups using the language and reasoning appropriate to the communicative context, within and across their personal and professional communities and cultures. Graduates will be able to present their ideas or perform their works in a way that is clear and accessible to a variety of audiences. Connecting with peers and experts, they will be able to communicate responsibly through digital and other means.

### 4. Resilience and Life-long Learning

**Western graduates will be able to** adapt to personal and professional changes and challenges across the life course by being self-aware, resilient, and self-reflexive. In addition to their mastery of discipline specific knowledge and methods, graduates will be able to articulate a clear understanding of their own values, interests, and goals as well as the limitations of their own knowledge and perspectives. Accepting that change is ongoing, graduates will recognize the advantages of stepping outside of their comfort zone to continue to enhance their knowledge and capabilities.

### 5. Global and Community Engagement

**Western graduates will be able to** interact ethically and compassionately with others and with the natural and social world. Western graduates will be ready to act locally and imagine globally; practice perspective taking and empathy; understand the interconnectedness of the world as expressed through technology, culture, belief systems, economics, and politics; to understand and to exercise social, political and environmental responsibility both at home and abroad.

### 6. Critical Inquiry and Creative Thinking

**Western graduates will have developed** habits of constructive skepticism, differentiation and intellectual adaptability in their approaches to phenomena, artefacts, issues, or arguments. They will be able to identify underlying assumptions, agendas, purposes, audiences, points of view, paradigms, evidence, implications, and logical strategies and thereby arrive at conclusions about reliability. They will bring habits of careful judgement, an appetite for further refinement, aesthetic engagement, and artistic expression or highly developed problem-solving skills to their pursuits.

### 7. Professionalism and Ethical Conduct

**Western graduates will be able to** recognize the ways in which their conduct affects others in their field or fields, profession, community, or society. They will be able to work effectively with others practically (e.g. time management, conflict resolution); ethically (e.g. division of intellectual responsibility and credit) and socially (e.g. respecting cultural differences, work preferences). Graduates will be able to apply their

studies responsibly to situations they find in the world around them, with the ability to explore ideas, issues, and the world at large from viewpoints other than their own.

**Table 1:** Detailed UUDLE - WDO Alignment Chart

University Undergraduate Degree-level Expectations	Western Degree Outcomes
<p><b>1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. developed knowledge and critical understanding of the key concepts, methodologies, current advances, theoretical approaches and assumptions in a discipline overall, as well as in a specialized area of a discipline</li> <li>B. developed understanding of many of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines</li> <li>C. developed ability to: i) gather, review, evaluate and interpret information; and ii) compare the merits of alternate hypotheses or creative options, relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline</li> <li>D. developed, detailed knowledge of and experience in research in an area of the discipline</li> <li>E. developed critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline</li> <li>F. the ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Knowledge</b></p> <p>Western graduates will have developed a sense of discovery that drives their ability to ask and frame questions, seeking to make connections that are not immediately obvious among phenomena and ideas. Western graduates will be able to explain the differences and linkages between the theories, research methods and core ideas of the disciplines they have studied, and analyze and solve problems according to the accepted methods of their field or fields. With their knowledge, graduates will have the ability to identify opportunities in their disciplines and see connections between other areas of study in order to imagine, create or produce novel solutions, works or performances.</p> <p><b>2. Literacies and Interdisciplinarity</b></p> <p>Western graduates will be able to use disciplinary discourse, technical language, numerical literacy or other appropriate disciplinary systems of knowledge, research methods or ways of knowing to identify, locate and evaluate oral, print, graphic, numerical, scientific or digital information.</p> <p><b>6. Critical Inquiry and Creative Thinking</b></p> <p>Western graduates will have developed habits of constructive skepticism, differentiation and intellectual adaptability in their approaches to phenomena, artefacts, issues, or arguments. They will be able to identify underlying assumptions, agendas, purposes, audiences, points of view, paradigms, evidence, implications, and logical strategies and thereby arrive at conclusions about reliability. They will bring habits of careful judgement, an appetite for further refinement, aesthetic engagement, and artistic expression or highly developed problem-solving skills to their pursuits.</p>
<p><b>2. Knowledge of Methodologies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. an understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Knowledge</b></p> <p>Western graduates will be able to explain the differences and linkages between the theories, research methods and core ideas of the disciplines they have studied, and analyze</p>

<p>well established ideas and techniques;                  b) devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods; and                  c) describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research or equivalent advanced scholarship.</p>	<p>and solve problems according to the accepted methods of their field or fields.</p> <p><b>2. Literacies and Interdisciplinarity</b></p> <p>Western graduates will be able to use...disciplinary systems of knowledge, research methods or ways of knowing to identify, locate and evaluate oral, print, graphic, numerical, scientific or digital information. Graduates will be able to use disciplinary knowledge in order to research, reason and solve problems from a range of contexts relevant to practices in their disciplines. In proposing solutions, they will be able to describe the limitations of the sources and methods they use.</p> <p><b>4. Resilience and Life-long Learning</b></p> <p>In addition to their mastery of discipline specific knowledge and methods, graduates will be able to articulate a clear understanding of their own values, interests, and goals as well as the limitations of their own knowledge and perspectives.</p>
<p><b>3. Application of Knowledge</b></p> <p>A. the ability to review, present and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) develop lines of argument;</li> <li>b) make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study;</li> <li>c) apply underlying concepts, principles, and techniques of analysis, both within and outside the discipline;</li> <li>d) where appropriate use this knowledge in the creative process.</li> </ul> <p>B. the ability to use a range of established techniques to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and information; propose solutions;</li> <li>b) frame appropriate questions for the purpose of solving a problem;</li> <li>c) solve a problem or create a new work.</li> </ul> <p>C. the ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</p>	<p><b>1. Knowledge</b></p> <p>Western graduates will have developed a sense of discovery that drives their ability to ask and frame questions, seeking to make connections that are not immediately obvious among phenomena and ideas. .... Graduates will have the ability to identify opportunities in their disciplines and see connections between other areas of study in order to imagine, create or produce novel solutions, works or performances.</p> <p><b>6. Critical Inquiry and Creative Thinking</b></p> <p>Western graduates will have developed habits of constructive skepticism and intellectual adaptability in their approaches to phenomena, artefacts, issues, or arguments. They will be able to identify underlying assumptions, agendas, purposes, audiences, points of view, paradigms, evidence, implications, and logical strategies and thereby arrive at conclusions about reliability. They will bring habits of careful judgement, an appetite for further refinement, aesthetic engagement, and artistic expression or highly developed problem-solving skills to their pursuits.</p> <p><b>2. Literacies and Interdisciplinarity</b></p> <p>Western graduates will be able to use disciplinary discourse, technical language, numerical literacy or other appropriate disciplinary systems of knowledge, research methods or ways of knowing to identify, locate and evaluate oral, print, graphic, numerical, scientific or digital</p>

	information.
<p><b>4. Communication Skills</b>                  A. the ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences.</p>	<p><b>3. Communication</b>                  Western graduates will be able to interact and collaborate effectively with other individuals and groups using the language and reasoning appropriate to the communicative context, within and across their personal and professional communities and cultures. Graduates will be able to present their ideas or perform their works in a way that is clear and accessible to a variety of audiences. Connecting with peers and experts, they will be able to communicate responsibly through digital and other means.</p> <p><b>5. Global and Community Engagement</b>                  Western graduates will be able to interact ethically and compassionately with others and with the natural and social world.</p>
<p><b>5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge</b>                  A. An understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and ability, and an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits to knowledge and how this might influence analyses and interpretations.</p>	<p><b>2. Literacies and Interdisciplinarity</b>                  Western graduates will be able to... explore complex problems from a variety of perspectives, recognizing bias and identifying missing or underrepresented voices. Working under conditions of ambiguity or uncertainty, graduates will be able to use disciplinary knowledge in order to research, reason and solve problems from a range of contexts relevant to practices in their disciplines. In proposing solutions, they will be able to describe limitations of the sources and methods they use.</p> <p><b>4. Resilience and Life-long Learning</b>                  Accepting that change is ongoing, graduates will recognize the advantages of stepping outside of their comfort zone to continue to enhance their knowledge and capabilities.</p> <p><b>5. Global and Community Engagement</b>                  Western graduates will be ready to act locally and imagine globally; practice perspective taking and empathy; understand the interconnectedness of the world as expressed through technology, culture, belief systems, economics, and politics; to understand and to exercise social, political and environmental responsibility both at home and abroad.</p>
<p><b>6. Autonomy and Professional Capacity</b>                  A. Qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring:                  a) the exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in both personal and group contexts;                  b) working effectively with others;</p>	<p><b>7. Professionalism and Ethical Conduct</b>                  Western graduates will be able to recognize that their conduct affects others in their field or fields, profession, community, or society. They can work effectively with others practically (e.g. time management, conflict resolution); ethically (e.g. division of intellectual</p>

<p>c) decision-making in complex contexts.</p> <p>B. The ability to manage their own learning in changing circumstances, both within and outside the discipline and to select an appropriate program of further study.</p> <p>C. Behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.</p>	<p>responsibility and credit) and socially (e.g. respecting cultural differences, work preferences). Graduates will be able to apply their studies responsibly to situations they find in the world around them, with the ability to explore ideas, issues, and the world at large from viewpoints other than their own.</p> <p><b>4. Resilience and Life-long Learning</b></p> <p>Western graduates will be prepared to adapt to personal and professional changes and challenges across the life course by being self-aware, resilient, and self-reflexive. In addition to their mastery of discipline specific knowledge and methods, graduates will be able to articulate a clear understanding of their own values, interests, and goals as well as the limitations of their own knowledge and perspectives.</p> <p><b>5. Global and Community Engagement</b></p> <p>Western graduates will be able to interact ethically and compassionately with others and with the natural and social world. Western graduates will be ready to act locally and imagine globally; practice perspective taking and empathy; understand the interconnectedness of world systems through technology, culture, belief systems, economics, and politics; to understand and to exercise social, political and environmental responsibility both at home and abroad.</p>
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**Table 2:** Summary UDLE - WDO Alignment Chart

UDLE	WDO
Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	Knowledge Critical inquiry and Creative Thinking Literacies and Interdisciplinarity
Knowledge of Methodologies	Knowledge Literacies and Interdisciplinarity Resilience and Life-long Learning
Application of Knowledge	Knowledge Critical Inquiry and Creative Thinking Literacies and Interdisciplinarity
Communication Skills	Communication Global and Community Engagement
Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	Literacies and Interdisciplinarity Resilience and Life-long Learning Global and Community Engagement
Autonomy and Professional Capacity	Professionalism and Ethical Conduct Resilience and Life-long Learning Global and Community Engagement