



Douglas College

**DOUGLAS COLLEGE
ACADEMIC SIGNATURE
FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT
(revised edition)**

March 2007

INTRODUCTION

The development of an explicit ‘academic signature’ for all Douglas College open and limited enrollment programs represents a new commitment to our students and the community. The concepts and educational rationale for the components of the academic signature are drawn from longstanding discussion at Douglas College and elsewhere. So while the components are not new, their intentional embedding across all our offerings and our willingness to hold ourselves accountable for their achievement represents a new approach. (Douglas College Academic Plan, 2005, p.7)

The Douglas College Academic Plan, which was approved by Educational Council and the College Board in February 2005, includes a recommendation for the development of an explicit Douglas College Academic Signature. This recommendation is a response to the ongoing expansion and diversification of course offerings at our institution. The Academic Signature attempts to recognize and articulate common practices and goals that students will encounter in Douglas College certificate, diploma, and degree programs.

The Academic Signature is not a credential in itself, but rather describes a *learning environment* and a set of *core competencies* that contribute to students’ success in their further education. The components of the Academic Signature are already embedded within many Douglas College courses and programs and will be implemented in others over the next few years.

Although the central principles of the Academic Signature will contribute to the college’s identity in the larger community, the detailed information in this document is intended for internal use. The practices and goals articulated in this document will provide a new lens through which faculties and departments can view curriculum as they develop new programs and engage in regular processes of program review, update, and revision.

There are four central characteristics of the Douglas College learning environment that the Academic Signature initiative seeks to promote:

- **ACADEMIC CHALLENGE**
- **BREADTH OF LEARNING**
- **LEARNING-CENTRED APPROACHES**
- **OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY KNOWLEDGE**

The Academic Signature also includes nine core competencies in the following categories:

- **INQUIRY**
 - Information Literacy**
 - Technological Literacy**
- **REASONING**
 - Quantitative Reasoning**
 - Analytical Reasoning**
- **COMMUNICATION**
 - Spoken Communication**
 - Written Communication**
 - Intercultural Communication**
- **CITIZENSHIP**
 - Teamwork**
 - Social Responsibility**

Three levels of learning outcomes—statements about what students are expected to know or to be able to do as a result of learning activities—have been identified for each of the nine core competencies. Upper level courses may teach the same competencies as first year courses, but at a more sophisticated level. Students will acquire the core competencies appropriate to their field of study. Accordingly, the learning outcomes associated with each of the nine core competencies are described with terminology that may be adapted by different programs and credentials. For example, technological literacy may be a competency that all college programs provide, but the specific type of technological training will likely vary from program to program. For guidance in interpreting competency levels in the context of a particular course or program, please see the *Core Competencies and Learning Outcomes* section below.

The Douglas College Academic Signature will promote a distinctive set of characteristics for our college and for its graduates. It will also show prospective students the richness of the educational experiences they will encounter here, and give them another reason to select Douglas College for their postsecondary education.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

ACADEMIC CHALLENGE:

Students should find that their courses at Douglas College stimulate them intellectually and challenge them to develop their cognitive abilities. Course content is grounded in research, theory, and professional practice. Programs will meet standards of academic excellence to prepare students for future work and study.

BREADTH OF LEARNING:

Douglas College programs provide students with specialized knowledge and supply the opportunity for students to understand this specialized knowledge within broader intellectual contexts. Students may encounter these broad contexts within individual courses, through “breadth” courses within a program, or through electives required by a program.

LEARNING-CENTRED APPROACHES:

Instructors should be committed to choosing the best possible approach to help their students acquire the knowledge and abilities they need. These instructional approaches may be traditional (e.g., lectures, labs, group discussions), experiential (e.g., service learning), or experimental (e.g., employing new educational technologies), and should be supported by college services.

OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY KNOWLEDGE:

Douglas College is committed to the idea that students should be able to apply the knowledge and abilities they acquire, whether in their further post-secondary education, in their employment experiences, or in other activities such as community work. Students will have opportunities to apply their new knowledge within courses or programs offered at our college, or through links with the community such as the Co-operative Education Program.

CORE COMPETENCIES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The following section introduces the nine core competencies and provides a general descriptive statement of each, followed by a set of learning outcome statements. Learning outcome statements indicate clear progression from Level 1 to Level 3. Bloom's Taxonomy, a hierarchy of educational objectives within the cognitive domain, was used to determine increased complexity of intellectual ability for each level. Each learning outcome describes competencies that successful students will demonstrate upon course completion.

INQUIRY

Information Literacy

Students will become independent learners who demonstrate the ability to locate, manipulate, absorb, and add value to information; they will combine fluency in information retrieval techniques with sound investigative methods, critical discernment, and ethical use of intellectual property.

Learning Outcome - Level 1:

Recognize when information is needed to solve a problem and create a simple but effective research plan to identify and locate relevant sources. Demonstrate an understanding of plagiarism and academic integrity. Cite references appropriately.

Learning Outcome - Level 2:

Compare and contrast the purpose, scope, and relevance of a wide variety of information sources. Employ complex research techniques, critically appraise the usefulness, currency, and objectivity of information retrieved, and modify the research plan accordingly.

Learning Outcome - Level 3:

Propose and plan research projects using an extensive range of general and discipline-specific information sources. Develop surveys, experiments, and/or interviews to collect original data, and ethically manage information collected.

Technological Literacy

Students will use evolving computer technology to retrieve, store, process, transmit, and create a variety of types of information.

Learning Outcome - Level 1:

Use common software to communicate and to complete simple information-management tasks.

Learning Outcome - Level 2: Use appropriate software to solve problems in a particular discipline or occupation. Manage a variety of forms of information.

Learning Outcome - Level 3: Evaluate and use advanced technology to solve complex problems as required in a specific field of study or occupation.

REASONING

Quantitative Reasoning

Students will demonstrate an awareness of and proficiency with various computational skills that will allow them to effectively interpret and use quantitative information.

Learning Outcome - Level 1:

Comprehend numerical information and models such as formulas, graphs, tables and schematics. Solve problems involving quantitative information.

Learning Outcome - Level 2:

Categorize classes of quantitative problems and select appropriate techniques for analysis and problem solving. Interpret results from calculations to draw appropriate conclusions.

Learning Outcome - Level 3:

Use mathematical concepts and skills to solve complex problems in relevant academic or technical fields. Evaluate limitations of mathematical and statistical models.

Analytical Reasoning

Students will develop the ability to think critically about information, issues, or problems, and then respond with effective arguments or strategies.

Learning Outcome - Level 1:

Recognize the difference between unsupported opinions and arguments. Identify issues and problems, and respond with arguments or strategies that are appropriate within a specified context.

Learning Outcome – Level 2:

Recognize factors that surround or underlie an issue or problem and develop more sophisticated arguments or strategies as understanding of the situation broadens and deepens. Analyze other people's arguments and respond to them.

Learning Outcome – Level 3:

Examine an issue or problem from multiple perspectives, and understand the broader contexts from which these perspectives arise. Distinguish sound reasoning from fallacious reasoning in the evaluation of complex arguments. Integrate other people's arguments as understanding of the issue develops, resulting in more informed and refined arguments and strategies.

COMMUNICATION**Spoken Communication**

Students will demonstrate fluency in speaking, listening, and working with others, including communicating in a professional manner.

Learning Outcome - Level 1: Identify their own strengths and weaknesses as communicators and recognize how their own influence on interpersonal communications. Identify effective and ineffective communication in a variety of contexts. Effectively manage communication anxiety. **Learning Outcome - Level 2:** Select and use appropriate responses from a variety of interpersonal skills. Demonstrate effective oral presentation skills. Present materials such as instructions, formal and informal explanations, and/or formal presentations in styles suited to content and intended audience.

Learning Outcome - Level 3: Identify the sources, nature and effects of conflicts. Apply effective strategies for developing relationships and working with others. Prevent and manage conflict.

Written Communication

Students will demonstrate the ability to read efficiently, sensitively, and critically and to express their ideas and feelings in writing in order to inform or persuade an audience.

Learning Outcome - Level 1:

Read and understand material addressed either to the general public or to introductory level students in an area of study. Recognize persuasive strategies. Understand fundamental discourse structures in a field of study or workplace. Write with grammatical competence, coherence, clarity, and conciseness.

Learning Outcome - Level 2:

Read specific information about a particular area of inquiry, and effectively integrate evidence and analysis from this written material into a reasoned argument. Write accurately and effectively, adapting content, persuasive strategies, style, and tone to suit a specific purpose, audience, and field of study.

Learning Outcome - Level 3:

Read and critically evaluate complex information and analysis specific to a discipline. Write competently in a variety of academic and/or workplace genres showing a sophisticated understanding of persuasive strategies and logical argumentation. Plan, write, and edit work to discipline standards.

Intercultural Communication

Students will show awareness of their own cultural identities and those of others. They will develop the ability to communicate effectively in a multicultural environment in order to promote harmonious intercultural relations.

Learning Outcome - Level 1:

Recognize cultural differences and show awareness of the general features of their culture and the world views associated with it. Develop awareness of the interaction among personal, social, and cultural identity in their sense of self.

Learning Outcome - Level 2:

Identify the impact of their own culture on communication behaviours and social expectations. Identify cultural differences in communication expectations and adapt their own behaviour accordingly.

Learning Outcome - Level 3:

Apply knowledge of the interplay of culture and communication in order to understand intercultural interactions and communication behaviours. Identify subtle cultural differences in social, academic, professional, and political practices, and respond with appropriate communication strategies to meet mutual goals.

CITIZENSHIP**Teamwork**

Students will demonstrate the ability to operate effectively in supportive and leadership roles when working collaboratively.

Learning Outcome - Level 1:

Give and accept constructive criticism; work co-operatively in groups and share decision-making. Demonstrate self-awareness in group situations.

Learning Outcome - Level 2:

Comprehend and apply skills needed for effective teamwork. Adopt a variety of roles, and adjust personal behaviour and performance to support team efforts.

Learning Outcome - Level 3:

Accept and provide leadership and support others through the process of consensus building. Collaborate effectively and ethically with other team members and evaluate team performance.

Social Responsibility

Students will demonstrate the capacity for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, cultural, and social life.

Learning Outcome - Level 1: Recognize and discuss how personal rights and social responsibilities affect their area of study, intended occupation, and personal life.

Learning Outcome - Level 2: Identify community, provincial, federal, and global issues related to their field of study, and develop informed and reasoned positions on those issues.

Learning Outcome - Level 3:

Analyze organizational and/or community characteristics and needs, and develop strategies to meet shared goals. Integrate processes for ethical decision-making into personal and professional practices.