

**IN 140/IN 183: University Seminar
2016-2017 Assessment Report
Dr. Robert Money, Coordinator of University Seminar**

(1) History and Context

Nearly a decade ago, our curriculum suffered from a lack of clarity regarding the role of IN140, University Seminar; it had been unclear exactly what we wanted IN140 to do. Sometimes, we used it as a “dumping ground.” For example, if we thought a skill set important but did not know where to put it (e.g., oral communication), we put it in IN140, without giving serious attention to the implications that this might have for the internal coherence of the course. In addition, we paid little attention to how IN140 might connect to the larger curriculum. We tended to treat IN140 as less of an academic course and more of a stand alone “orientation to college” course. Our inability to see IN140 as an academic course connected to the larger curriculum was, in part, a function of a lack of full coherence within our University Studies program and a lack of clarity regarding how our University Studies program was connected to the University’s educational mission, values, and goals.

During 2006-2007, a consensus emerged that our University Studies program needed to undergo re-examination and revision. A Nyberg seminar was convened during the summer of 2007 to focus on this project. The Seminar, comprised of six faculty members representing all colleges across the University, was charged with “refreshing the MPSL in ways that better meet our stated University Studies learning objectives.” Accordingly, the Seminar was asked to “produce a definitive set of suggested revisions to the University Studies portion of the MPSL.” The product of the Seminar’s summer work was a formal report, “Refreshing the Millikin Program of Student Learning.” This report proposed numerous revisions to our University Studies program, including several that impacted directly on IN140, University Seminar. The Nyberg report served as the basis for the eventual recommendations for reform of the University Studies program brought to the full faculty by the Council on Curriculum during the fall 2007 semester. Those recommendations were voted on and accepted by the full faculty during the fall 2007 semester.

As a result of these revisions, IN140 was reconceptualized, reformed, and refocused, especially in relation to its function vis-à-vis the larger University Studies curriculum. Among the more important revisions to IN140 were the following:

- IN140 was formally understood as an **academic** course first and foremost, charged with providing students an “*introduction* to academic inquiry at the college level.”
- IN140 was formally understood as the place in our curriculum where students would be *introduced* to the skill of “**critical and ethical reasoning**.” This skill thread would run vertically through the sequential elements of the University Studies curriculum (i.e., IN250, IN251, and IN350).
- IN140 was formally understood as one of two places in our first-semester first-year curriculum where students would engage in **reflection** (the other location is IN150, Critical Writing, Reading, and Research – the other half of the first-year learning community). This skill thread would also run vertically through the sequential elements of the University Studies curriculum (i.e., IN250, IN251, and IN350).
- IN140’s focus on student reflection would be intentionally connected to its use of **service learning**. Connecting student reflection to service learning allows IN140 to introduce students to one hallmark of a Millikin education – the commitment to “theory and practice” and experiential learning.
- IN140 would continue to engage students in specific **orientation topics**, with the help of a First Year Experience Mentor. This allows IN140 to serve as a targeted location within our curriculum where we take seriously our obligation to help students transition to college life, both academically and socially. This embodies our commitment to the education of the whole person.
- IN140 was formally relieved of its obligation to deliver oral communication. A new element within the University Studies program, “Oral Communication Studies,” was created and charged with the delivery of that skill.

This reconceptualization of IN140 links it in very clear and very intentional ways to larger University values and to the larger curriculum, particularly the sequential elements of the University Studies program. As a result of these changes, our assessment of this component of the University Studies curriculum had to be revised and refocused. The 2008 report, responding to the larger institution-wide curricular changes that occurred the previous year, sought to establish a clear framework within which the assessment of IN140 could take place. Where possible and appropriate, it suggested that we continue to use methods of assessment used in the past. However, the fundamental reconceptualization of IN140 demanded that new methods of assessment be utilized going forward. Of equal importance, it required that faculty teaching the course be informed of these methods *in advance of teaching the course*.

The 2009 Report was the first report with the opportunity to implement the assessment framework envisioned in the 2008 Report. This year’s Report (2017) continues to

implement and advance that assessment framework. We now have NINE years of credible data to draw from and have reached the point where we can identify trend lines over time.

(2) Description and Learning Goals

The formal course description and the formal course learning goals for University Seminar are as follows:

IN140. University Seminar (3) Fall semester freshman year. This course is an introduction to academic inquiry at the college level. Seminar topics vary across sections. Each section engages students in critical and ethical reasoning, includes a service learning component, and addresses specific orientation topics. The learning outcome goals for students taking IN140 are that students will be able to:

1. use ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on issues that impact their personal lives as well as their local, national, and/or global communities;
2. reflect on the significance of contributions to community through service learning; and
3. work collaboratively and creatively with diverse others.

As indicated by the course learning goals, the course asks teachers and students to do several different things. Regardless of the particular substantive content of the course (content is chosen by the particular faculty member teaching the course), each course is expected to do the following: engage students in **ethical reasoning**, engage students in **service learning with reflection**, and engage students in a discussion of **orientation topics** pertaining to the first-year student.

The University Seminar experience is intended to be a *unique* learning opportunity for first-year students entering the university. University Seminar is an *introduction* to academic inquiry; it is not an introduction to any particular major. This distinction is crucial for understanding the learning goals of the course. University Seminar is an academic course designed to facilitate the development of certain specific skills while engaging students in a particular substantive content. While allowing for great diversity of substantive content among sections, this introduction to academic inquiry is anchored by two key academic skills: (1) critical and ethical reasoning, and (2) reflection. By engaging students in critical and ethical reasoning and reflection, the course introduces students to skills that will be further developed by the sequential elements of the University Studies program as well as courses in the students' chosen majors. Moreover, by engaging students in critical and ethical reasoning and reflection,

the course facilitates the development of skills that are indispensable to professional success, democratic citizenship in a global environment, and the discovery and creation of a personal life of meaning and value. Furthermore, by having students engage in reflection about their service learning experiences, the course takes academic skills out of the formal classroom setting and connects them with our larger community. The course, thus, serves as an initial introduction to Millikin's commitment to "theory-practice" education and experiential learning, a pedagogical commitment that will be reinforced in the students' chosen majors.

In addition to its academic focus, the course also provides students with an opportunity to build community on campus. All students enrolled in a fall section of University Seminar participate in First Week orientation. First Week provides students opportunities to acclimate to campus life and to meet and to bond with their University Seminar classmates and instructors. This community building function is reinforced over the course of the semester by the "learning community" comprised of the "cohorting" of each section of IN140 with a section of IN150, Critical Writing, Reading and Research. The students move as a group between these two academic courses. This experience builds community among the students, and allows for the possibility of cross-disciplinary collaboration by the faculty involved.

Finally, the course provides students with an opportunity to engage with specific orientation topics that address a variety of "life skills" issues important for student success during the transition to college. In this regard, the course employs an upper classman as a mentor, again grounding the students on campus and providing them with a "student" resource to consult on numerous topics. The student mentors apply for the position and receive extensive training in preparation for helping deliver the course, particularly with respect to orientation topics (a.k.a., student success topics).

In sum, then, University Seminar is intended to be a place of intellectual growth, shared learning, and community building. In addition, it is the specific location within our curriculum where we take seriously our obligation to help students transition to college life, both academically and socially. We are, after all, interested in the education of the whole person. No other course on campus aims to function in this unique way.

Addendum 2017: A Memo on Service Learning

The following memo was written by Dr. Money and circulated to all seminar instructors preparing for the fall 2016 academic semester. The purpose of the memo is to clarify the "service learning" requirement for IN140.

To: Fall 2016 IN140 Instructors
From: Dr. Robert Money, Faculty Coordinator, IN140
Re: Clarification of Service Learning Requirements in IN140
Date: July 13, 2016

The purpose of this memo is to clarify the nature of the service learning requirement for IN140, University Seminar. I start with the course description and course learning goals. I have bolded for emphasis the language that refers to service learning.

IN140. University Seminar (3) First semester freshman year: This course is an introduction to academic inquiry at the college level. Seminar topics vary across sections. Each section engages students in critical and ethical reasoning, **includes a service learning component**, and addresses specific orientation topics. The learning outcome goals for students taking IN140 are that students will be able to: 1. Use ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on issues that impact their personal lives as well as their local, national, and/or global communities; 2. **Reflect on the significance of contributions to community through service learning**; and 3. Work collaboratively and creatively with diverse others.

The official course description for IN140 mentions a “service learning component” and the standard course learning goals require students to “reflect on the significance of contributions to community through service learning.” No other guidance is offered beyond these general and broad references. Instructors, therefore, have broad discretion in determining how to structure their sections to address the service learning component of IN140. This is as it should be.

As seen in the course description and learning goals, there is no minimum hour requirement. There is only the requirement that each section include a service learning *component* and the requirement that students *reflect* on that component of the course. These requirements do not entail that service learning must be a major component of the course. Instead, the extent and the degree to which service learning is incorporated into a particular section of IN140 are up to the instructor. The extent to which an instructor utilizes service learning should be based on the instructor’s choice of content and the instructor’s judgment regarding effective pedagogical methods for the delivery of that content.

Given the broad discretion given to instructors, variation in the use of service learning is to be expected. Such variation is exactly what we see with respect to all of the other essential components of the course: seminar topics (i.e., substantive content),

engagement in critical and ethical reasoning, and coverage of orientation topics. For example, while each section is required to engage students in critical and ethical reasoning, there is no requirement that ethical reasoning be the central focus of the course, that multiple ethical reasoning essays be produced, etc. There is only the broadly stated requirement that each section “engages students in critical and ethical reasoning” and the requirement that students “use ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on issues that impact their personal lives as well as their local, national, and/or global communities.” Given these broadly stated requirements, variation in approach to the delivery of ethical reasoning is what we should expect and such variation is, in fact, what we get. Some sections make ethical reasoning the central focus of the course with nearly all course assignments targeting the skill. Other sections treat critical and ethical reasoning as ancillary and require only a single ethical reasoning essay. This variation is acceptable with respect to ethical reasoning; the same will be true of service learning.

In light of the above, I am comfortable specifying the following minimum requirement for service learning. At a minimum, all students will engage in service learning through the First Week “Day of Action” (8:30-12:30 on August 19 and August 20). Instructors who do not believe service learning should be a major component of their sections can utilize this First Week activity as the basis for constructing a prompt that will require students to “reflect on the significance of contributions to community through service learning.” This reflection can be collected for assessment purposes. This minimum requirement for service learning guarantees that each section includes a service learning *component* and that each section engages students in *reflection* on that component of the course. No additional service learning is mandatory or required.

The minimum requirement set forth above, however, does not preclude instructors from doing more with service learning. Thus, if an instructor believes that a more extensive and developed service learning experience is appropriate for the delivery of the content of her section and the various course learning goals, she is free to develop a more extensive service learning component for her individual section. Accordingly, those instructors who already have a well established and substantially robust service learning component for their sections do not need to make any changes. Instructors making this choice should consult with Pam Folger to ensure that all risk management and logistical issues related to service learning are appropriately and adequately addressed. This should be done as early as possible.

To summarize: A service learning *component* is required in IN140 and student *reflection* on that component is required and must be collected for assessment purposes. It is up to the faculty member to determine the extent, size, and scope of the service learning component, the percentage of the grade that will be a function of that component, etc.

The variation that we should expect with respect to service learning is exactly the same as the variation we should expect with respect to choice of topic, engagement in critical and ethical reasoning, and coverage of orientation topics. That variation and diversity springs from a commitment to faculty autonomy with respect to the choice of substantive content for IN140 and faculty autonomy with respect to the choice of appropriate pedagogical methods for the delivery of that content and the course learning goals. Faculty autonomy has been and will continue to be preserved in the delivery of IN140.

(3) Snapshot

The seminar topics for University Seminar are varied and are selected by individual instructors. Faculty are encouraged to be creative in their selection of topics – the faculty member can create the course he or she has always wanted to teach, or explore an area of interest even if that area is not directly in their area of expertise, etc. Maximum freedom of choice is given to the faculty teaching the course. Regardless of the substantive content, however, all sections are required to deliver the learning goals that are definitive of the course and address student success topics pertaining to the first-year student.

During fall 2016 semester, 26 sections of University Seminar were offered. This included 17 traditional sections (averaging 18.76 students each), 5 honors sections (averaging 17.2 students each), and 4 “enhanced” sections serving underprepared students (averaging 11.25 students each). All students taking seminar were co-enrolled in a section of IN150, Critical Writing, Reading and Research. There were no learning communities associated with any specific undergraduate program.

During the fall 2016 semester, 11 sections of University Seminar were taught by full-time faculty members, 8 by adjunct faculty members, and 7 by full-time administrators. 16 instructors taught one section and 5 instructors taught two sections.

Given its multiple functions (as described above), University Seminar is best delivered by a diverse and multitalented set of faculty. One of – if not *the* – most important factors in a successful educational experience is high quality teaching. As an institution, Millikin University is committed to providing our students with excellent teachers. This commitment is not confined to the delivery of the major; it extends to the delivery of our University Studies program. Accordingly, faculty quality must be monitored throughout the curriculum. Judgments about quality instruction, however, must go beyond easy to make judgments such as the number/percentage of full-time faculty

instructors delivering the curricular component, or the number/percentage of faculty with terminal degrees delivering the curricular component. While these sorts of easily obtainable data may be relevant to whether you are likely to get high quality instruction, they certainly do not guarantee it. Of at least equal importance are faculty passion and commitment to the course, as well as faculty experience relative to the unique nature of the course.

The instructors who taught University Seminar during the fall 2016 semester represent a typical “lineup.” Our use of adjuncts and select administrators to help deliver University Seminar is done in such a way so as to allow those with proper qualifications (both educational and experiential) to help deliver the course. We have a diverse and multitalented set of instructors committed to the delivery of this course. Each of these instructors brings her own distinctive skills and areas of expertise to the course – skills and expertise that fit well with the diverse aims of this unique course.

(4) Assessment Methods

As noted in the 2008 Report, given the reforms made to University Seminar in the past few years, new methods for assessing the course were required. The following methods are now established and will be employed going forward:

- Administration of a newly reformed University Seminar Survey (see below)
- Tracking SIR data for University Seminar and comparing that data against similar SIR data for faculty across the University.
- Syllabi audits (using an audit form specifically designed for University Seminar).
- Review of a random sampling of “artifacts” (generally, written papers) collected for purposes of assessing the primary academic learning goal for which University Seminar has sole responsibility during the first year: critical and ethical reasoning.

***Comment on Newly Reformed Survey Instrument:

In the 2008 Assessment Report, learning outcomes goals for University Seminar were assessed, in part, through the *Your First College Year* student survey. That survey was administered during the spring semester to students enrolled in IN151, CWRRII. Thus, it was administered during the semester *after* IN140, University Seminar was completed. That survey instrument has been discontinued since the 2008-09 academic year. Anticipating its discontinuation, Dr. Money, Faculty Coordinator for IN140, called for the construction and administration of a new survey instrument. This was proposed in the “Trends and Improvement Plans” section of the 2008 Assessment Report. The new survey instrument maintains some overlap with the prior instrument so that we

can continue to track trends over time relative to specific elements of the course. However, it also includes revisions that allow it to better track student attitudes and, more importantly, *behaviors* that relate to the specific learning goals of University Seminar. This new survey instrument was constructed in time to be administered by University Seminar instructors during the 2008 fall, at the end of the semester. Here is the new survey instrument:

IN 140 University Seminar Survey

Section _____

1. The academic content of my University Seminar course was challenging.
4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree
2. The course caused me to engage in a great deal of critical thinking.
4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree
3. I used ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on an issue that impacts my personal life.
4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree
4. I used ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on an issue that impacts my local, national, or global community.
4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree
5. Our section's service learning project was a purposeful experience.
4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree
6. I could see direct connection between our course content and our class service learning project.
4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree
7. I engaged in reflection on my service learning experience.
4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree
8. The orientation topics that were covered helped me to adapt to college life.
4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree
9. There was a strong connection between the instructors of my IN 140 and IN 150 courses.
4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree
10. The University Seminar course helped me feel more equipped to succeed in college.

4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree

11. I feel that the University Seminar course was worth taking.

4 - strongly agree 3 - agree 2 - disagree 1 - strongly disagree

(5) Assessment Data

The fall 2016 offerings of University Seminar represent the **ninth** time instructors constructed their University Seminar offerings in light of knowledge of the revisions made to our University Studies program, including the revisions that impacted on the function and role of University Seminar. This Report includes SIR data, syllabi audit data, and an examination of a random sampling of student work (“artifacts”) relevant to the major academic learning goal for which University Seminar has sole responsibility during the first year, ethical reasoning. Due to an oversight, the University Seminar Survey was not administered in 2016. It was administered in 2017.

A. University Seminar Survey

At the close of the fall 2016 semester, all faculty teaching sections of University Seminar were asked to administer the University Seminar Survey. 20 of the 26 sections returned surveys. Approximately 305 of the 450 students enrolled in University Seminar completed the survey. This represents a response rate of 68%. All respondents were first year students. For each survey item statement relating to University Seminar, respondents rated their agreement on a 4-point, likert-style scale (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree). If the survey item represents a continuation from items asked on previously administered YFYC surveys, those previous results will also be identified.

The following charts provide comparative data regarding survey data. The charts include data for the most recent nine years of assessment.

The following chart provides the statistical means for each item on the survey instrument (with comparisons to prior surveys, if available). Means that represent an all-time high are highlighted in green:

Question	Fall 2007	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2016
# Respondents	301	397	115	351	307	305	338	334	305
Course Content Challenging	2.61	3.08**	2.94	2.89	2.82	2.91	2.81	2.93	2.88
Engaged in Critical Thinking	2.61	3.14	3.16	3.26	3.25	3.32	3.34	3.46**	3.38
Engaged in Ethical Reasoning on Personal Issue	n/a	2.96	3.07	3.07	3.09	3.23	3.15	3.32**	3.29
Engaged in Ethical Reasoning on Local, National, Global, Community Issue	n/a	2.96	3.12	3.04	3.14	3.22	3.17	3.35**	3.39**
Service learning was a purposeful experience	2.54	2.88	2.89	3.07	3.14	3.20**	3.16	3.12	3.16
Service Learning Connected to Course	2.50	2.77	2.61	2.87	2.72	2.97**	2.72	2.83	2.81
Engaged in Reflection on Service Learning	n/a	2.87	3.00	3.16	3.13	3.22	3.17	3.23**	3.22
Orientation topics helped me adapt to college life	2.68	2.70	2.68	2.94	2.86	2.97	3.00	2.98	3.05**
Cohort between IN140 and IN150 was strong	2.29	2.21	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.41	2.51	2.57	2.62**
Course Equips Me to Succeed in College	2.50	2.74	2.71	2.94	2.89	2.95	2.96	3.08	3.16**

Course was worth taking	2.76	2.89	2.84	3.00	3.01	3.12	3.12	3.28**	3.25
Overall Index Score on Eight Items from Original YFYC Survey	2.56	2.80	2.77	2.93	2.90	2.98	2.95	3.03	3.04**
Overall Index Score on Survey as Revised (11 Items)	n/a	2.84	2.86	2.98	2.96	3.05	3.01	3.10	3.11**

The following chart identifies the percentage of “**positive**” responses (“strongly agree” and “agree”) to the individual survey item statements. Again, all-time high results are indicated with green highlight:

Question	Fall 2008	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2016
# Respond	301	385	115	351	307	305	338	334	305
Course Content Challenging	56%	80%	68%	75%	70%	74%	73%	75%	73%
Engaged in Critical Thinking	56%	79%	82%	89%	87%	90%	94%	95%	94%
Engaged in Ethical Reasoning on Personal Issue	n/a	71%	80%	84%	82%	90%	90%	91%	91%
Engaged in Ethical Reasoning on Local, National, Global, Community Issue	n/a	75%	83%	79%	86%	90%	87%	91%	94%
Service learning	55%	74%	70%	76%	82%	85%	90%	82%	85%

was a purposeful experience									
Service Learning Connected to Course	54%	65%	59%	66%	62%	74%	61%	67%	66%
Engaged in Reflection on Service Learning	n/a	72%	79%	85%	86%	89%	89%	90%	90%
Orientation topics helped me adapt to college life	62%	65%	64%	76%	71%	80%	79%	77%	81%
Cohort between IN140 and IN150 was strong	42%	37%	41%	51%	51%	45%	54%	54%	58%
Course Equips Me to Succeed in College	50%	68%	67%	75%	70%	78%	80%	82%	86%
Course was worth taking	61%	68%	71%	74%	74%	83%	80%	84%	84%

The following chart identifies the percentage of “**negative**” responses (“strongly disagree” and “disagree”) to the individual survey item statements.

Question	Fall 2008	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2016
# Respond	301	397	115	351	307	305	338	334	305
Course Content Challenging	31%	20%	32%	25%	30%	26%	27%	25%	27%

Engaged in Critical Thinking	30%	21%	18%	11%	13%	10%	6%	5%	6%
Engaged in Ethical Reasoning on Personal Issue	n/a	29%	20%	16%	18%	10%	10%	9%	9%
Engaged in Ethical Reasoning on Local, National, Global, Community Issue	n/a	25%	17%	21%	14%	10%	13%	9%	6%
Service learning was a purposeful experience	28%	26%	30%	24%	18%	15%	10%	18%	15%
Service Learning Connected to Course	30%	35%	41%	34%	38%	26%	39%	33%	34%
Engaged in Reflection on Service Learning	n/a	28%	21%	15%	14%	11%	11%	10%	10%
Orientation topics helped me adapt to college life	24%	35%	36%	24%	29%	20%	21%	23%	19%
Cohort between IN140 and IN150 was strong	42%	63%	59%	49%	50%	55%	46%	46%	42%

Course Equips Me to Succeed in College	35%	32%	33%	25%	30%	22%	20%	18%	14%
Course was worth taking	26%	32%	29%	26%	26%	17%	20%	16%	16%

B. SIR Data Comparison

For the past nine years, SIR data have been collected for the following three items: (1) scale summary data for course organization and planning, (2) scale summary data for communication, (3) overall evaluation. The following table compares SIR mean scores for faculty at the university (first number) with the mean scores for faculty teaching all IN sequential courses across the entire university (the second number) and faculty teaching IN140 specifically (the third number). These data are for the fall 2016 semester. Data for all sections are included. The average response rate for all IN140 sections was 35%, a rate slightly higher than the response rates for the university as a whole (32%) and for IN courses generally (34%).

SIR Item	University Means	All IN Sequentials	All IN140 Instructors
Course Organization & Planning	4.41	4.35	4.58
Communication	4.47	4.37	4.60
Overall	4.34	4.17	4.43

As measured by SIR data, we have made substantial improvements over the past nine years. The following table tracks the SIR data for all sections of University Seminar over the past nine years. The data indicates a clear trend line of substantial progress in terms of strengthening the quality of teaching in IN140 as measured by this instrument.

Nine Year SIR Results for IN140 (2008-2016)

**=all time high

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Course Org. and Planning	4.11	4.19	4.34	4.11	4.40	4.24	4.45	4.28	4.58**
Communication	4.21	4.27	4.42	4.24	4.46	4.33	4.51	4.35	4.60**
Overall Evaluation	3.89	3.98	4.25	3.96	4.29	4.10	4.35	4.13	4.43**

C. Syllabus Audit Data

For the fall 2016 semester, 25 syllabi were collected; all sections submitted a syllabus. (One instructor teaching two sections submitted only one syllabus.) Each syllabus was audited to see if it contained specific items relevant to the delivery and assessment of University Seminar. The following data provides information regarding the number of syllabi containing the relevant items as specified on the audit form.

**IN140 University Seminar
Syllabus Audit Form**

	Syllabus is acceptable on item	Syllabus has item included but not in acceptable form	Syllabus does not have item
TOP of FIRST PAGE: Course Identification: course number, course name, faculty, semester	25, 100%		
SOMEWHERE in SYLLABUS:			
Faculty contact info: name, office, office hours, office phone, email address	25, 100%		
Course description: Standard description (see below) plus faculty written course description/overview	24, 96%	1, 4%	

Standard course learning goals (see below)	23, 92%	1, 4%	1, 4%
Instructor's grading policy - scale and weights for assignments & for the semester	25, 100%		
Instructor's attendance policy – penalties	24, 96%	1, 4%	
Academic honesty & integrity statement (standard)	25, 100%		
University disability statement (standard, see below)	25, 100%		
Specification of a written assignment that will serve as ethical reasoning artifact for assessment purposes	22, 88%	3, 12%	
Specification of a written assignment that will serve as service learning with reflection artifact for assessment purposes	25, 100%		

D. Artifact Collection: Ethical Reasoning

For the **ninth** time, we used an electronic medium (Moodle) to allow students to upload their ethical reasoning artifacts directly to a central storage location. A central course “shell” was created. Within that shell, a folder entitled “Ethical Reasoning” was created. Students were automatically enrolled in the course and then instructed to deposit the relevant assignments (identified by their instructors) into the appropriate folder. This method of collecting student work creates a central location for the deposit of student work and relieves faculty of the responsibility of making sure that the work is passed along to the IN140 Coordinator.

The process by which ethical reasoning is assessed in IN140, University Seminar is as follows. Two artifacts (papers) are examined from each section. Assuming full participation by all sections and student enrollments of 20 students per section, this would represent a random review of 10% of students.

Participation for fall 2016 was excellent, continuing the marked improvement that we have seen over the past years. A total of 51 ethical reasoning artifacts were examined. These artifacts were randomly selected from across 26 sections of University Seminar, with two artifacts coming from each section except for one section. All sections provided artifacts. This represents a participation rate of 100% of Seminar sections, and a random sampling of 11.33% of the 450 total students enrolled in University Seminar during the fall 2016 semester.

It is worth noting that this is the seventh consecutive year the random sampling has reached the desired 10% threshold. In addition, it is worth noting that a total of 287 artifacts were submitted electronically to moodle. This represents a participation rate of 64% of all students.

On all artifacts, the assessor used yellow highlight to flag specific items relevant to ethical reasoning. Green highlight was used to indicate the assessor’s comments.

The electronic copies of the artifacts are saved on a disk. Copies of both the electronic and/or paper artifacts are in the possession of the faculty coordinator of University Seminar (Dr. Money).

The assessor on all ethical reasoning artifacts was Dr. Money. Assessment was done based on the ethical reasoning rubric (see below). That rubric scores artifacts on four criteria across a three level range: 1 (nominal), 2 (adequate), or 3 (excellent). Thus, each artifact has a total rubric based score of between 4 and 12. On the basis of its total score, each artifact is tagged as falling into one of three categories:

Nominal (Red – Stop)	Adequate (Yellow – Caution)	Excellent (Green – Go)
4-6	7-9	10-12

Any partial scores are rounded up. So, an artifact with a total score of 6.5 is placed in the “adequate” category while an artifact with a total score of 9.5 is placed in the “excellent” category.

The electronic copies of the artifacts are saved on a disk. Copies of both the electronic and/or paper artifacts are in the possession of the faculty coordinator of University Seminar (Dr. Money).

The following table identifies the number of artifacts falling into each of the three major categories. Again, 51 total artifacts were reviewed.

Nominal (Red – Stop)	Adequate (Yellow – Caution)	Excellent (Green – Go)
5 (10%)	19 (37%)	27 (53%)

(6) Analysis of Assessment Results

A. University Seminar Survey

When viewed in general and in comparison to previous administrations of the YFCY survey, the survey data for 2016 indicate that we continue to solidify some of the significant gains that we have made in a number of important areas; in many areas, further advancement is clearly seen. Indeed, the mean responses for six of the eleven individual question items were at all-time highs, an impressive result. This is made more impressive by noting that we achieved all-time highs on nine items the previous year.

We continued to receive strong results on all survey items associated with the key **academic skills** of the course. Students are consistently reporting that Seminar engages them in critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and reflection on service learning. I would emphasize that the results obtained on each of the survey items emphasizing the major academic skill components of the course received strong marks:

- Engaged in *critical thinking*: 94% of respondents indicating a “positive” response (i.e., strongly agree or agree).
- Engaged in *ethical reasoning* on personal issue: 91% indicating a positive response.
- Engaged in *ethical reasoning* on a local, national, global issue: 94% indicating a positive response.
- Engaged in *reflection on service learning*: 90% indicating a positive response.

As the data show, at least nine out of every ten students are indicating a positive response on survey items designed to track their engagement in *behaviors* related to the major academic skills delivered by the course. This is the sixth consecutive year that we

have achieved impressive results on these items. These data suggest, therefore, that we continue to do an excellent job of improving the academic rigor of the course and delivering on the goal of having IN140 serve as an introduction to *academic* inquiry. These are exceptionally strong results.

Perhaps more importantly is the fact that the means on each item that targets an academic skill are uniformly and consistently above 3.00. Of perhaps more importance, *we have been north of 3.00 on each question for seven consecutive years*. Those items are:

- engaged in critical thinking
- engaged in ethical reasoning on a personal issue
- engaged in ethical reasoning on a local, national, and/or global community issue
- engaged in reflection on service learning

It is worth noting that the data indicate that we have solidified the very substantial gains we saw the previous three years with respect to **service learning**. All three items that focus on service learning were very strong:

- Service learning was a purposeful experience: 3.16, with 85% indicating a positive response.
- Service learning was connected to the course: 2.81, with 66% indicating a positive response.
- Engaged in reflection on service learning: 3.22, with 90% indicating a positive response, an all-time high.

Similarly, the mean for the summative question item “course worth taking” (3.25) continued to be a strong result – the sixth consecutive year we have achieved a mean on this item at or above 3.0. Additionally, 84% of students indicated a positive response to the item, “course worth taking.” In short, more than four out of every five students indicate that the course was worth taking. The trend line becomes clear when we notice that the positive response rate on this item nine years ago was 61%. Clear and steady improvement over time is the clear trend.

As a whole, University Seminar students indicated that they benefited from the inclusion of first-year orientation topics within their course. 81% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that class orientation topics (citizenship, academic strategies, diversity, healthy relationships, and wellness) helped them adapt to college life – an all-time high.

Survey respondents continue to perceive a comparatively weak connection between their IN 140 and IN 150 instructors, but we improved substantially on this item. 58% either agreed or strongly agreed that there was a strong connection between their

University Seminar and CWRR I instructors, an all-time high result and a substantial increase from the 45% positive response of four years ago.

In sum, the data suggest a clear trend line under which we have solidified the substantial gains that we have made over the past seven years, and under which we continue to improve in numerous areas.

B. SIR Data

This is the **ninth** time in our assessment of IN140 that the SIR data of University Seminar faculty have been collected for review and compared with the SIR data of faculty at the university. SIR data are included in this report as *part* of an effort to ensure faculty quality in University Seminar. The goal of our assessment, after all, is to help us self-monitor and work to ensure that our students receive a quality educational experience in IN140. SIR data are relevant to the pursuit of that goal. While SIR data are not determinative of teaching effectiveness, they are an important piece of evidence. Faculty members wishing to present a case for tenure and/or promotion are required to include SIR data. Clearly, then, the institution is seemingly committed to the value of SIR data, even if that data must be properly contextualized and understood in relation to other dimensions of teaching pedagogy and effectiveness.

The SIR data for the fall 2016 offerings of University Seminar show that on each of the three evaluated items, the average means scored for IN140 faculty were above 4.0 (an informal university benchmark norm for teaching excellence). For the first time, the mean scores on each of the three items evaluated were ***above*** the mean scores for faculty at the university and for faculty teaching IN courses across the university. As seen in the table above showing SIR data over the past nine years, the results for this year represent all-time highs in each category and represent our ability to sustain the improvements that we have made over the past nine years in this area.

To further contextualize these results, it is imperative to remember that IN140 is the ***only*** course required of all students that students take without prior knowledge regarding the course content (i.e., no course descriptions of content are provided). Moreover, the students enrolled in each section truly represent an interdisciplinary mix of students. Instructors of IN140 are not teaching students who chose their section because they are interested in the course topic (since students do not know what the course will be about), or students who are majoring in the instructor's area of specialization. These realities present significant and unique challenges to IN140 instructors, challenges that no other instructor in any other course at the university must confront and navigate. In addition, it is widely known that required courses in

“general education” tend to yield lower SIR means than courses in the major or courses that are purely electives. Our SIR results must be understood in this larger context. So contextualized and understood, the results are truly impressive.

Overall, the SIR data indicate that we have made substantial progress in our efforts to bring higher quality instructors to IN140 as measured by SIR results. Given the fluctuation that occurs in terms of instructors for the course each fall, we need to continue our efforts to secure high quality instruction as measured by SIRs across all sections, and not just in substantial pockets of the course.

C. Syllabi Audits

Course syllabi were audited under a formal syllabus audit form that was distributed to faculty in advance of the fall semester. The data reveal that on all items, nearly all faculty members are constructing syllabi that target the skills and responsibilities that are definitive of the course. This year, we had six new instructors. This fact likely explains why there was not 100% compliance with all elements of the audit form. Most importantly, given that student artifacts were collected from all sections, those syllabi that failed to “tag” an artifact for collection represent merely a “formal” deficiency, not a substantive one.

As indicated in section (1) “Context” above, the course has been substantially revised in the recent past. Our instructors have shown an excellent commitment to modifying their courses and syllabi so as bring them into compliance with the course as revised. Syllabi have been adjusted, modified, and organized so as to bring the desired uniformity to the presentation of the course. Again, this uniformity is *not* about substantive content or topic selection, but about the skills and activities that are definitive of the course. In addition, the distribution of the syllabus audit form in advance of the fall semester (as well as posting it online) has likely helped bring about this uniformity of presentation.

The data reveal that instructors have made necessary revisions and that we have achieved near 100% marks on all items for the seventh consecutive year.

D. Artifact Collection

This is the **ninth** time that a sufficient number of artifacts have been examined to provide us with meaningful data. The following two tables track collection and participation rates for the past nine years:

Table #1 (a): Ethical Reasoning Artifact Collection and Participation (2013-2016)

Year	Fall 2013 (2014 Report)	Fall 2014 (2015 Report)	Fall 2015 (2016 Report)	Fall 2016 (2017 Report)
# of Students in Seminar	443	470	415	450
# of Artifacts Submitted	348 78.5%	362 77%	313 75%	287 64%
# of Artifacts Selected and Assessed	48	50	49	51
% of Students who had Artifacts Assessed (goal 10%)	10.8%	10.64%	11.81%	11.33%
# of Seminar Sections Taught	24	25	25	26
# of Seminar Sections with Students Submitting Artifacts	2 artifacts from 24 sections	2 artifacts from 25 sections	2 artifacts from 24 sections 1 artifact from 1 section	2 artifacts from 25 sections 1 artifact from 1 section
% of Seminar Sections Participating	100% fully participating	100% fully participating	100% fully participating	100% fully participating

Table #1 (b): Ethical Reasoning Artifact Collection and Participation (2008-2012)

Year	Fall 2008 (2009 Report)	Fall 2009 (2010 Report)	Fall 2010 (2011 Report)	Fall 2011 (2012 Report)	Fall 2012 (2013 Report)
# of Students in Seminar	482	540	498	434	536
# of Artifacts Submitted	?	?	374 75%	330 76%	399 75%
# of Artifacts Selected and Assessed	38	44	56	46	56
% of Students who had Artifacts Assessed (goal 10%)	7.9%	8.1%	11.2%	10.6%	10.4%
# of Seminar Sections Taught	27	28	28	25	28
# of Seminar Sections with Students Submitting Artifacts	2 artifacts from 18 sections 1 from 2 sections 0 from	2 artifacts from 19 sections 1 from 6 sections 0 from	2 artifacts from 28 sections	2 artifacts from 23 sections 0 from 2 sections	2 artifacts from 28 sections

	7 sections	3 sections			
% of Seminar Sections Participating	66% fully participating 7% partly participating 27% not participating	68% fully participating 21% partly participating 11% not participating	100% fully participating	92% fully participating	100% fully participating

The one piece of data that will be flagged and monitored more closely concerns the total number of artifacts submitted. For the first time, we fell below a 70% submission rate. While we were able to review artifacts from each section, we need to work to ensure that our overall submission rate remains strong.

We have now established a firm baseline and have reached the point where clear trend lines can be identified. The data allow us to make some tentative judgments.

The following table identifies the number of artifacts falling into each of the three major categories:

Nominal (Red – Stop)	Adequate (Yellow – Caution)	Excellent (Green – Go)
5 (10%)	19 (37%)	27 (53%)

The data show that a substantial percentage of student artifacts demonstrated at least adequate ethical reasoning skills: 90%. This is an excellent achievement.

The data also show that we have made and continue to make and/or secure meaningful and substantive advances in a range of categories. In order to better see the trend line, the following table places this year’s results alongside the results from the previous eight years for which data is available.

Table #2: Ethical Reasoning Assessment Results (2006-2016)

Year	Nominal (Red – Stop)	Adequate (Yellow – Caution)	Excellent (Green – Go)
2016	10%	37%	53%
2015	18%	22%	60%
2014	14%	40%	46%
2013	15%	23%	62%
2012	9%	39%	52%
2011	17%	26%	57%
2010	16%	25%	59%
2009	20%	30%	50%
2008	24%	42%	34%

Regarding the data:

- Each of the past seven years, we have collected above the desired 10% threshold.
- This fall (2016), a strong percentage of student artifacts assessed at adequate levels or higher: 90%.
- This fall (2016), the percentage of artifacts assessed as nominal decreased from 18% the previous year to 10% this year. The substantial work we have done paying attention to assignment construction continues to make a significant impact, but more work is needed. It is worth noting that two of the five artifacts that assessed as “nominal” came from a single section of seminar. This suggests that the assignment utilized in that section is not constructed so as to target ethical reasoning.
- As was the case last year, most, if not all, of the artifacts that assessed as nominal were classified in that way because the writing simply did not engage in ethical reasoning. In many cases, this could be a result of the type of prompt or assignment that is constructed. For example, the prompt and assignment must be constructed so that students are directed to do more than simply reflect on ethical issues in their own personal lives. We have devoted some development

energy on assignment/prompt construction and this is likely part of the reason we have continued to decrease the number of artifacts assessing at the nominal level. We should continue this work.

- This fall (2016), the percentage of artifacts that assessed as “excellent” decreased from 60% to 53%. The downward shift here was reflected in the substantial uptick in the percentage of artifacts that assessed as “adequate,” which rose from 22% in 2015 to 37% this year. On the other hand, the increase in “adequate” artifacts is also explained by the decrease in “nominal” artifacts.
- In general, the data indicate that we have solidified our rather substantial gains and held them across numerous cycles of assessment review.

(7) Trends and Improvement Plans

A. Improvement in Assessment Methods

In the 2010 Report, it was noted:

We have now reached the point where we are able to assess a sufficient number of artifacts to provide us with data. We are getting artifacts from the vast majority of sections. Our goal, now, needs to be to *increase the overall total rate of compliance by students*. That is, we need to increase the number of students who are submitting artifacts so that the random sampling taken will, in fact, be a random sampling of IN140 students. We have made the submission process very easy. There is a central depository set up on Moodle. Students are sent step-by-step directions on how to upload their artifacts. Nevertheless, a large number of students simply do not follow through. We need to incentivize the students. How to do so will be a topic for collective discussion. Options might include: (a) penalization of grade for failure to upload the assignment; (b) refusal or delay in releasing student grades; (c) entering all students who upload their assignment into a raffle contest; etc.

Conversations during the fall 2010 semester did, in fact, address the above concern and the results suggest that we have effectively addressed that concern. This current report marks the seventh time that we have participation by over 90% of seminar sections and the seventh time that our sampling pool of artifacts crossed the 10% threshold. As noted above, there is a concern about our slippage in the total number of artifacts submitted, which for the first time fell below 70% of IN140 students. The faculty coordinator will

address this concern at the spring 2017 meeting and discuss ways to improve overall collection rates.

The new University Seminar survey instrument provides us with a way to continue tracking trends in responses to items that used to appear on the YFCY survey while at the same time including items that ask students to report on their behaviors in seminar relative to ethical reasoning and reflection, the two primary academic skills. We will continue to employ this survey going forward.

We still have substantial work to do in terms of securing contributions made to the delivery of the course by full time faculty. Only 11 of the 26 sections were taught by full-time tenure-track faculty at Millikin University (42%). It is important that we work to ensure that full-time faculty members make significant contributions to the delivery of the course. However, it is far more important that we continue to attract high quality instructors to the program, regardless of their full-time, adjunct, or administrative status.

The continued strong results from the SIR data collected are one positive sign that we have attracted quality teachers to the program. We must continue to work to ensure that high quality teachers deliver this important element within our University Studies program.

Finally, it is worth noting that this year's Report was written in January 2017. This is the seventh time the Report has been completed before summer. This early completion will enable those faculty members who taught the course and who plan to teach Seminar during the fall 2017 semester to review our results and engage in conversations that will further solidify the important gains that we have made over the past years.

B. Faculty Development

As was done last year, immediately following the finalizing of this report, the faculty coordinator will send out the Report to all instructors who taught Seminar in the fall 2016 semester and to all instructors scheduled to teach University Seminar in the fall 2017 semester as they become identified. The goal is to put this data and information in front of the faculty teaching the course so that they can think intentionally (and well in advance of the start of the fall 2017 semester) about ways to engage our students in the key academic skills for which the course is responsible.

The Report will provide us with a baseline for faculty development meetings and/or workshops over the future, where appropriate and as needed. While this is sometimes

done in a collective fashion, there are also numerous one-on-one meetings held between the faculty coordinator and individual instructors. This allows the coordinator to target specific issues, concerns, and needs of individualized instructors and avoids burdening others with needless time-consuming meetings.

As was true last year, some artifacts that scored “nominal” had potential. In some cases, it seemed that the way in which the assignment was constructed or “pitched” did not facilitate student engagement in ethical reasoning. For example, an assignment that asks students to identify ethical dilemmas that arose in their service learning experiences is, standing alone, not going to engage students in ethical reasoning because the assignment does not call for or encourage the generation of *argument*. However, the same idea could be reworked so as to ask students not simply to identify ethical dilemmas, but to take a position on those issues and provide an argument in support of the position they take. This would intentionally direct students to engage in ethical reasoning. The faculty coordinator will continue to make himself available to instructors to discuss ways in which assignment prompts appropriate to the content chosen by the instructor can be shaped to engage students in ethical reasoning as we have operationalized it at Millikin.

(8) Closing Remarks

In closing, it should be noted that a great deal of work has been and is being invested in IN140. First and foremost is the commitment and passion of those instructors who step to the plate to deliver this important element in our University Studies program. As evidenced by the data above, this group of instructors is multitalented and brings a wealth of competencies to the delivery of this unique course.

In addition to the actual delivery of the course, a number of substantial efforts have been made in an effort to improve the assessment mechanisms for IN140, all with the aim of helping us make University Seminar a quality educational experience for our students. We continue to look for ways to make substantive and meaningful efforts to maintain and improve the quality of the educational experience provided by University Seminar. And in the end, providing a high quality educational experience for our students is the point of it all.