

Bachelor of Liberal Arts Annual Assessment Report for AY 24

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Brief Program Overview

The Bachelor of Liberal Arts (BLA) is a flexible, multidisciplinary degree program in which students take classes in different areas (Humanities, Social Science, Alaska Native Studies and Languages, Natural Science, Business, etc.). It is appealing to students looking to complete a college degree, to design their own course of study, and to engage critically with a variety of academic fields. We assess the BLA through an exit survey and interview of graduating students, and through student portfolios. Average student achievement of the learning outcomes for the degree exceeds expectations for all categories, although I will address several learning outcomes in the goals section.

BLA Committee & AY 24 activities

Faculty actively involved in the BLA are the AY24 program coordinators Andrea Dewees (Juneau) and William Urquhart (Ketchikan). James Ryan joined the Committee this year in anticipation of increased teaching and distance co-coordination of the BLA in AY 25. Drs. Rosemarie Alexander-Isett and Carla Kroeze joined as well, improving our disciplinary representation on the committee.

In addition to our annual review of the assessment plan and portfolio, correspondence with the registrar and advisors, and advising of BLA students:

- Drs. Urquhart and Dewees handled language waivers and course substitutions for students.
- the BLA committee agreed to some minor curricular changes to the degree, and these were proposed through Courseleaf in February 2024 (increasing course options for the BLA core).
- The BLA coordinators revisited the Alaska Native Languages and Studies BLA primary emphasis, in light of the new Indigenous Studies degree, but made no decisions. We will revisit this matter with Alaska Native Studies faculty again in the fall.
- Bill Urquhart and Andrea Dewees presented to advisors on the BLA.
- Dr. Dewees successfully recruited a Business Studies faculty member. This is wonderful given the number of students pursuing the newer business studies secondary concentration.
- Dr. Dewees created a BLA overview presentation for the new faculty members to the BLA committee and is working on a BLA advising training for faculty (in consultation with the A&S advisors). She also wrote draft portfolio instructions for students (with feedback from Dr. Urquhart), and a draft prompt for the diversity/community engagement statement (with feedback from Alaska Native Languages and Studies, Writing Center, CELT, and Education faculty).
- Dr. Dewees met with the new Associate Dean to discuss the BLA and our assessment process.
- Dr. Dewees will try to meet with the new Director of Admissions this spring.
- Drs. Dewees and Urquhart coordinated to place HUM 210 students with faculty advisors.
- Dr. Dewees met with the new A&S staff advisor to discuss advising, student data, advising placement, etc. Su Reyes has been wonderful to work with and has provided data for quick student outreach. We are lucky to have her!
- Given that we have a number of students with Art primary or secondary concentrations, Andrea Dewees met with Art professor Jeremy Kane to discuss quality of artifacts in the portfolio, particularly photos of 3D art objects. Professor Kane demonstrated the small studio set up (with

lighting) in Soboleff and emphasized that he is available to help students who need to take photos of their art pieces.

BLA Program Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the BLA degree, students should be able to:

1. Articulate ideas, content, and personal goals through purposeful written or artistic expression.
2. Demonstrate interdisciplinary competency in their chosen field(s).
3. Create original work or research in their chosen field(s).
4. Critically engage assumptions, presuppositions and gaps in thought, social discourse, and creative expression within their chosen field(s).
5. Engage with the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska.

Although these are the learning outcomes we have been using, they are not the ones listed in the catalog. Consequently, Dr. Dewees submitted a curriculum program change in February 2024.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

BLA students assemble an academic portfolio in the Humanities 499 Capstone course (or, if not enrolled in the Capstone, separately). The portfolios are stored on Google Drive and a random selection is annually evaluated by the BLA faculty committee. Faculty assign scores to the following fields using a 5-point scale:

Outcome 1: BLA Outcomes Essay
Outcomes 1, 4 and 5: Language Competency and Diversity Statement
Outcome 1: Professional CV or Résumé
Outcome 1: Professional Portfolio Overall
Outcome 2: Competency in Designated Emphasis, Independent Design, or primary field (if interdisciplinary)
Outcome 2: Competency in secondary field (if interdisciplinary)
Outcome 2: Overall quality of writing in samples
Outcome 3: Example of Research or Creative Work
Outcome 3: Overall quality of the upper division sample
Outcome 4: Evidence of thoughtful examination of issues from multiple perspectives and reflection on assumptions, etc.
Outcome 5: Statement of Community Involvement

5-point scale:

- 0 = Nothing (no or incorrect materials)
- 1 = Minimal Evidence (inadequate)
- 2 = Some Evidence (underdeveloped)
- 3 = Meets Expectations (satisfactory)
- 4 = Exceeds Expectations (above average)
- 5 = Superior (high-level presentation, analysis, critical thinking and/or synthesis)

Assessment of Academic Year 2022-2023

Professors Alexander-Isett, Dewees, Kroeze, and Ryan evaluated ten student portfolios from AY 23. Dr. Dewees overlapped with faculty on three portfolios and averaged those scores.

	Mean	Min	Max	N*
BLA Outcomes Essay	4.1	3	5	10
Language Competency and Diversity Statement	3.9	2	5	6
Professional CV or résumé	3.75	3	5	10
Professional Portfolio Overall	3.75	1	5	10
Competency in Primary Field	<i>4.1</i>	2	5	8
Competency in Secondary Field	<i>4</i>	3	5	7
Overall quality of writing in samples	<i>4.1</i>	2	5	10
Example of Research or Creative Work	<i>4.3</i>	3	5	10
Overall quality of the upper-division example	<i>4.4</i>	3	5	10
Evidence of thoughtful examination of...	<i>4.1</i>	2	5	10
Statement of Community Involvement	3.6	1	5	8

*Less than 10 indicates this element was missing from the student's portfolio.

Bold means that scores slightly decreased compared to last year; *italics* indicate scores increased.

Evaluation

AY 22-23 portfolios exceeded expectations, although the means are slightly lower than last year for professional items (CV/resume, Outcomes Essay, etc.) and the statement of community involvement. On the other hand, scores in the interdisciplinary competency, research and creative work and critical thinking improved. Portfolios exhibited a wide variety of topics in research, creative work, and critical thinking. Some writing samples needed more careful editing for punctuation and citations. We continue to advocate for increased attention to writing and revision as part of HUM 499, and across the UAS curriculum.

A few portfolios were missing elements such as the Language Competency & Diversity, writing samples, and/or the statement of community involvement. Some artifacts, particularly art pieces, lacked sufficient context.

All students are asked to complete a written exit survey, and we also facilitated an exit interview in April 2023. AY 23 survey and interview responses were similar, with students expressing overall satisfaction with the BLA degree (60% extremely satisfied), their education (60% extremely satisfied, with very high satisfaction ratings for the critical thinking and language/cultural diversity components of the degree), and their BLA faculty (90% extremely satisfied).

The flexibility of degree paths and options for courses were emphasized in the exit survey, although a few students wanted to see more face-to-face courses. Almost all of the students worked at a job 20 or more hours per week. Fewer students mentioned the legislative internship and other capstone options as important career-building opportunities than last year. Students would like to see more financial aid (scholarships), particularly for courses with a travel component, as well as more varied upper division offerings, particularly in English literature (these comments are likely related to the recent resignations of English literature professors, and Dr. Maier's sabbatical). One student mentioned that the degree's flexibility is overwhelming, and this is likely due to recent A&S advising turnover. One student suggested the BLA find a better way for students to relate their cultural connection and identity to the Program Learning Outcomes, particularly for Alaska Native Languages and Studies.

Conclusions and goals for AY25*

**Please note: Many of the goals from prior years are carried over here, and in the 5-year report. Planned and unplanned faculty retention issues and competing workload demands have reduced the collective faculty's ability to strengthen our programs. However, the addition of two new faculty members to the BLA committee is immensely helpful in terms of assessment and in attending to curricular needs in the Business Studies secondary concentration.*

- We emphasize the urgent need to co-develop a marketing strategy for the BLA with recruitment staff. We would also love to strategize how we can better highlight our students' work—there are some phenomenal projects, capstones, internships, and practica in our students' degrees. These are especially important goals given UAS' general enrollment challenges. Drs. Urquhart and Dewees were able to meet briefly with the Director of Admissions, Dashiell Hillgartner (before his departure in May 2023), to start this important conversation, but, without a director of admissions in Fall 2023 this initiative has been paused. Faculty need workload space to develop and conduct this work and we are hopeful there will be an opportunity for this in AY 25.
- Dr. Dewees met with Aimée Richards, Career Services Manager, in early January 2024 to learn about career resources and Handshake, with the goal of designing better assignments (CV/resume and Goals Essay) for 2024 Hum 499 students and providing better career guidance for BLA students. This is an important aspect of workforce development and UAS is lucky to have Aimée Richards in this role.
- 70% of BLA students reported being extremely satisfied with their faculty advisors, and Andrea Dewees is currently working on a faculty advisor training with A&S staff advisors. This will be particularly helpful as we bring in new faculty. Although A&S advising staff turnover has been a challenge in the past few years, it has been easy to work with the new A&S advisors (and it is very beneficial to have the AA/AS advisor in the same workspace). I am excited to further develop this advising partnership!
- The BLA faculty, particularly those who teach Hum 499, will continue to encourage students to copyedit portfolio materials. Jeremy Kane and Andrea Dewees will improve portfolio instructions and support for students with Art concentrations in AY 25.
- We continue to consider ways to streamline portfolio requirements for those not enrolled in HUM 499, and to review the portfolio elements and rubric so that there is a place to assess and place any capstone projects. We will also align the rubric with items in the portfolio folder. James Ryan and Andrea Dewees have tentatively planned to begin this work during the August 2024 convocation, and will revise the draft portfolio and diversity/community engagement statement instructions written by Dr. Dewees. Dr. Ryan will teach Hum 210 for the first time so we will likely take the opportunity to review materials for that course that help students as they plan their degree, and we will continue to work with A&S and other advisors to provide information about the BLA and address any concerns.
- We use a Google form for the exit survey. Hum 499 faculty and BLA program coordinators need to continue to ensure that students fill those out in cohorts, so that we can easily tabulate the responses.
- We are ecstatic to have new faculty on the BLA committee! We could use faculty representation from **Alaska Native Languages and Studies**, as these disciplinary areas are well represented in the BLA but not currently on the committee. We are grateful that professors Jeremy Kane (Art) and Carla Kroeze (Business Studies) have agreed to serve next year.

