

Cultivating Global Perspectives

Quality Enhancement Plan

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

a) ABSTRACT/SUMMARY:

Global education has been a focal point at Mason and our efforts in this arena have been many and strong. By capitalizing on our diversity and global location, the university can become an international leader in global education through focused attention on student learning in the global arena. This proposal is not about adding another global project to Mason's already long list of global efforts. Rather it is about taking stock of what we are currently doing, enhancing the effectiveness of current efforts with a focus on student learning, and creating new curricular and co-curricular opportunities that close the gaps.

Mason's mission includes the following, "Educate the new generation of leaders for the 21st century – men and women capable of shaping a new economy in a global community with vision, justice, and clarity." How can we more effectively achieve this mission and ensure that our programs and activities are preparing students to live in a global and multicultural world? Are we developing in our student body a solid understanding of global processes and an empathetic perspective toward others, both local and global? Are we developing students who take responsibility for affecting positive changes in their communities and in the world as the ultimate goal of their education? How do we enhance the global competency of our students so that they gain insight and develop critical perspectives needed to face complex international challenges in productive and ethical ways? And, how do we provide students with a core set of competencies for living and working in the global and multicultural world? The first step in the proposed QEP process would be to find answers to these and other questions. With these answers, we can begin building a coherent, purposeful combination of courses, programs, activities, and events that will bring about the desired student learning outcomes. This QEP proposal is timely and the results of our work are important to guarantee that Mason students graduate with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to be global citizens.

b) VISION:

The Association of American Colleges and Universities sets the stage for our vision of Cultivating Global Perspectives.

"AAC&U addresses diversity, global engagement, and social responsibility as compelling educational and institutional priorities that help students and campuses engage the social, civic, and economic challenges of a diverse and unequal world. AAC&U supports colleges and universities in their efforts to create settings that foster students' understanding of the intersection between their lives and global issues and their sense of responsibility as local and global citizens."ⁱ

As a university we are distinguished by the global experiences of our student body and the global dynamics that have shaped the institution's growth. To succeed in the 21st century,

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students need to leave the university with a solid understanding of global processes and an empathetic perspective toward others, both local and global. This would encourage students to take responsibility for affecting positive changes in their communities and in the world as the ultimate goal of their education. This QEP initiative seeks to enhance the global competency of our students so that they gain insight and develop critical perspectives needed to face complex international challenges in productive and ethical ways. It also implies that global competency will not come from a unilateral perspective on what is “best” for society but rather from a global perspective and understanding of how diverse cultures and communities view what “best” means.

Previous reports on global education at Mason have noted the growth and diversity of our global activities.

“The campus exudes energy, enthusiasm and on-going activity related to global education. This includes new and revised courses and curriculum, international scholars, faculty involvement, global research, international outreach and campus activities. The arts, humanities and social sciences, education, business, public policy, science and engineering, along with University Life are significant contributors to a campus ethos that lives and breathes an energy and enthusiasm for global education.”ⁱⁱ

Capitalizing on this energy and enthusiasm and consolidating and integrating our multiple global initiatives is Mason’s challenge and the purpose of this QEP. Colleges and universities throughout the nation have the global energy and enthusiasm but many fail to integrate their activities such that they can deliver meaningful student outcomes.

“Yet, despite widespread agreement among colleges and universities about the importance of global learning, AAC&U’s investigation of college practices reveals a disturbing disconnect. The goals for global learning at too many colleges and universities are unfocused. Moreover, too few colleges and universities offer structured educational opportunities for students to acquire knowledge, both theoretical and experiential, about the rest of the world, about America’s place in the world, and about the inequities and interdependencies that mark current geopolitical relationships.”ⁱⁱⁱ

This proposal affords us the opportunity to bring focus and structure to the global education opportunities we offer our students. In curricular and co-curricular arenas, an important goal of this initiative would be to foster our students’ ability to understand, appreciate, and critically think about the diversity of perspectives and debates about global processes and issues. Students would also be able to apply that knowledge effectively in their disciplines and fields toward leadership for social change, and toward sustainability. By creating synergy among the initiatives already underway at Mason and discovering what works, we can make the whole greater than the sum of its parts and ensure “evidence based” student global learning. While these goals are laudable, like many other universities we don’t fully understand what skills, knowledge and attitudes are necessary for students to effectively cultivate the global perspectives that might lead to positive global change. Nor do we fully understand how the

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varied and diverse initiatives and activities at Mason contribute to these goals. Uncovering more specifics around defining, achieving and measuring “global competency” is a key issue. How are our investments in global initiatives and activities at Mason achieving their intended results? It is precisely for this reason that this QEP proposal is so timely and the results of our work so important to the implementation of Mason’s strategic goals.

c) CONGRUENCE WITH MISSION AND GOALS:

Mason’s mission in global education has been evolving over the last twenty years.

“As early as 1990, the Office of the Provost at Mason stated the importance of multicultural and global initiatives. The need for academic and student affairs professionals to work collaboratively to provide environments that facilitate the success of students was emphasized. Responsibility was entrusted in part to a new committee, the Cultural Diversity Committee, made up of faculty, staff, and students committed to addressing the needs of Mason’s diverse population and to developing a plan that would propose relevant student services and academic initiatives.”^{iv}

Mason’s most recent mission statement states that we will “Educate the new generation of leaders for the 21st century – men and women capable of shaping a new economy in a global community with vision, justice, and clarity.” Through this QEP we want to ensure that students develop an informed and critical understanding of global processes and can approach global challenges in productive and ethical ways. As a result of this plan, Mason graduates will leave our university as citizens and leaders who will be well-equipped to handle and understand the challenges associated with globalization.

Mason has had an institutional goal of cultivating a global perspective in the last two strategic plans and it is stated again in the 2014 plan.^v

Mason’s 2014 Strategic Plan Global Initiatives

- Continue to emphasize global roles and the importance of promoting global understanding in the educational process. Articulating and meeting the relevant challenges of globalization including environmental challenges will define a significant portion of the University’s agenda during the coming period.
- Develop more fully as a global university, in outreach, research and education, to promote increasing global competence among our students, while extending global and local awareness in the environmental area.
- Improve the definition of the global issues category in general education and begin to develop assessment mechanisms in global competence.

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- Expand the number of international students by at least 20% while improving the integration of international and domestic students in extracurricular as well as academic activities.

The activities and initiatives that would be established as part of this QEP would address each of the aforementioned goals from our 2014 Strategic Plan.

SECTION 2: STUDENT LEARNING

a) GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

“Cultivating Global Perspectives” has four overarching goals for enhancing student learning through which we seek to implement Mason’s global goals.

1. Develop in our student body a solid understanding of global processes and an empathetic perspective toward others, both local and global.
2. Develop students who take responsibility for affecting positive changes in their communities and in the world as the ultimate goal of their education.
3. Enhance the global competency of our students so that they gain insight and develop critical perspectives needed to face complex international challenges in productive and ethical ways.
4. Provide students with a core set of competencies for living and working in the global and multicultural world of today and tomorrow.

The importance and relevance of these goals in our changing world is supported by a number of key educational organizations and associations.

1. The Association of American Colleges and Universities:

“Educating students for a global future is no longer elective. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has identified global knowledge, ethical commitments to individual and social responsibility, and intercultural skills as major components of a twenty-first-century liberal education.”^{vi}

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“After a scan of many stakeholder groups, AAC&U has confirmed that what had at first seemed an emerging trend actually represents a growing national consensus about the significance of global learning.”^{vii}

2. National Association of State Universities & Land-Grant Colleges:

The global education and competence of our students is more important than ever. NASULGC asserts that,

“...with the fast pace of change taking place in the world through globalization, the nations of the world and their peoples, cultures, societies and institutions – including those of higher education – are becoming more intertwined, interrelated and connected...To prepare our students for this changing world, to enhance and advance discovery, to carry out our mission of engagement, and to maintain our competitive edge, our colleges and universities must make global competency and international involvement, in its many different forms, important components of their strategic plans, policies and practices.”^{viii}

3. American Council on Education:

“...encourages institutions to adopt a strategy for comprehensive internationalization that emphasizes an integrated approach addressing both programmatic inputs and student outcomes.”^{ix}

b) **SAMPLE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Student learning outcomes are central to this QEP. Ten outcomes have been grouped into three categories.

Understanding Global Processes and Trends

1. Students will be able to identify and understand contemporary and historic global processes, conflicts, and their ramifications (e.g., globalization, colonialism, and transnationalism).
2. Students will understand the major processes of globalization, the theories about its development, and the critique of those theories.
3. Students will be able to explain global trends affecting their major field of study and analyze how their major field of study reflects and contributes to processes of globalization.

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Global Critical Thinking

1. Students will be able to compare and contrast alternative perspectives with critical rigor.
2. Students will demonstrate an enhanced critical awareness of ethical and social challenges facing 21st century leaders.

Engaging Others

1. Students will be able to substantively dialogue with others on topics related to global issues.
2. Students will be able to understand their own identity and culture in a global and comparative context – that is, they will recognize that their culture is one of many diverse cultures and that alternate perceptions and behaviors may be based in cultural differences.
3. Students will be able to adapt their core communication skills so that they can think, work, and move across boundaries, in diverse environments with a range of people.
4. Students will seek out international or cultural opportunities to advance their understanding of global processes and issues.
5. Students will be able to use foreign language skills and/or knowledge of other cultures to communicate and connect with people in other language communities and to extend their access to information, experiences and understanding.

Support for these learning outcomes can be found in the pronouncements of some of the most important educational organizations.

1. American Council on Education

“Virtually everyone talking about the outcomes of education insists on the centrality of learning to live and work in a diverse American and world society. Whether the discussion focuses on essential job skills, the capacities of citizenship, or the moral imperatives of the 21st century, all agree on the importance of understanding differences and, indeed, the difference that differences can make...Feeling comfortable and being capable of interacting with people who are culturally different is basic to being at home in the world, whether that world is defined by the workplace, the community, or the entire globe.”^{vii}

2. The Association of American Colleges and Universities

“AAC&U’s Greater Expectations Project on Accreditation and Assessment reported that global knowledge and engagement, along with intercultural knowledge and competence, have been identified as essential learning outcomes for all fields of concentration and for all majors.”^x

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SECTION 3: SIGNIFICANCE AND URGENCY

This QEP presents a window of opportunity to educate the next generation of leaders by enhancing the global competency of students through focused and structured curricular and co-curricular activities. We can enhance international cooperation throughout the university, in general education, in the sciences, in the arts, in the humanities and others by graduating students who understand the global issues facing society and are prepared to interact with each other in productive ways to find solutions to global issues and challenges.

We have seventy-six general education courses at Mason that have one or more global objectives. Projects are underway to create learning outcomes for the global understanding components of the general education requirements. Implementation of this QEP would refine and advance this work. The development of learning outcomes in general education will serve as a foundation for the creation of global competencies in departments throughout the university.

In spite of our diversity and global location in the nation's capital, we have not yet achieved a reputation for delivering a comprehensive international education. If we get this right, we could be recognized as an international leader in global education. This would create a powerful "Mason Magnet" for attracting students who want to make a difference through acquisition of the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to live in the global and multicultural world.

Given the global, national and local financial crisis, which is impacting Mason, it is more important than ever to make sure that scarce resources are invested wisely and that we are achieving through these investments the benefits we desire. This QEP will help ensure that our many investments in global at Mason are achieving their intended results.

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTATION AND SCOPE

a) POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES:

- 1) Form an interdisciplinary committee of faculty, students, and community and global education experts to coordinate and advise throughout the process.
- 2) Develop a university-wide faculty development program for understanding the global competencies and exploring creative ways to teach to those competencies. Hold a series of faculty seminars throughout the QEP years to build faculty competence in global education. This would be a development program for all faculty who teach to one or more of the global competencies and for all university life staff. At the completion of the seminar or series of seminars, faculty and staff will be able to:

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- a) Identify innovative ways to address the university-wide global competencies in their courses.
 - b) Understand the way in which the global competencies are assessed and what the most current assessments indicate.
 - c) Facilitate meaningful dialogue among and between students with diverse backgrounds and cultures.
 - d) Find ways to help students adapt their core communication skills so that they can think, work, and move across boundaries, in diverse environments with a range of people.
 - e) Develop course activities and projects to engage students in dialogue about global, ethical and social challenges.
 - f) Build on and connect existing curricular and co-curricular programs that foster global integration and engagement.
- 3) Identify how each of our courses, programs, activities and initiatives with a global focus at Mason link to these university-wide global competencies. Among the questions faculty need to address are: How do we develop in our student body a solid understanding of global processes and an empathetic perspective toward others, both local and global? How do we develop students who take responsibility for affecting positive changes in their communities and in the world as the ultimate goal of their education? How do we enhance the global competency of our students so that they gain insight and develop critical perspectives needed to face complex international challenges in productive and ethical ways?
- a) Identify how courses with global learning outcomes address one or more of these competencies. In other words, ask course faculty to link their course objectives to these university-wide global competencies.
 - b) Identify the University Life programs and initiatives, including student organizations and professional societies, which have a global focus and ask their sponsors to demonstrate how their goals address one or more of these global competencies.
 - c) Identify the study abroad programs and activities that support the global competencies.

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- d) Identify other programs and activities, including those in Housing & Residence Life, which contribute to the global competencies.
- 4) Analyze the results of this inventory and identify any gaps and areas needing further development including the need for faculty development.
- 5) Develop a university-wide assessment tool to determine if students are gaining proficiency in the global competencies. This would go beyond the current Graduating Senior Survey Report that asks respondents if they felt they had a better understanding of a specific global problem or issue than they did before they came to Mason.
- 6) Utilize the results of the above assessment each QEP year to restructure and redesign global education at Mason to:
 - a) Help faculty evaluate and structure learning outcomes for their courses, so that those courses contribute to student achievement of the global competencies.
 - b) Help University Life personnel restructure programs and activities, including student organizations and professional societies, so that they contribute to student achievement of the global competencies. Build on and connect existing curricular and co-curricular programs that foster global integration and engagement.
 - c) Enhance Mason's study abroad programs and activities in order to effectively contribute to the attainment of the global competencies.
 - d) Enhance any other programs and activities, including those in Housing & Residence Life, that contribute to the attainment of the global competencies.
- 7) Develop as part of the student orientation program a module that introduces the university-wide global competencies, why they are important, how they will be assessed and where in the university curriculum and campus activities (e.g., University Life and Housing & Residence Life) they will achieve the learning required to successfully attain these competencies.

b) COMMITMENT TO AND SUPPORT OF THE TOPIC:

Mason has invested considerable resources to achieve its global goals. Throughout the university, faculty and staff members and students have shown support for global engagement and education. As mentioned earlier, the campus community exudes energy, enthusiasm and there are a multitude of activities related to global education. We believe the Mason community will see the need to add focus and structure to these activities through this QEP.

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Among the many ideas for a QEP topic, there were four distinct proposals which related to enhancing the global education of students at Mason: a) Global Engagement at Mason; b) Global Learning Through Language; c) Social Entrepreneurship; d) World as Text: Diverse Communities, Shared Understandings. Clearly, there is considerable “energy” in the campus community about global initiatives and we have derived many of the ideas in this white paper from these proposals.

University administration should have a keen interest in supporting this QEP because it is consistent with and supportive of the University’s strategic goals and it addresses the challenge of conserving and investing wisely in scarce strategic resources. With the current limited availability of strategic and operating capital to support new initiatives it is important to recognize that a major portion of this proposal is about enhancing and achieving superior benefits from the resources already invested in global initiatives and doing so in a way that advances the implementation of the university’s strategic goals.

SECTION 5: ASSESSMENT

a) STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

This section describes the methods of assessment that could be used to reveal the effects of the QEP activities on student learning. The assessment methodologies described below are course-embedded.^{xi}

1. Student performance on papers, tests and exams; group work; student presentations; verbal engagement in class; research projects; performance-based projects.
2. Documentation of activities by individual departments on courses, seminars, presentations, discussions that pertain to students’ understanding of global processes and trends.
3. Capstone courses and projects addressing global issues, perspectives, processes and benefits.
4. Campus-wide evaluation rubrics for evaluating global competency and global critical thinking.

b) OTHER OUTCOMES:

This section describes the methods of assessment that could be used to reveal the effects of the QEP activities on other anticipated student outcomes. These include both external assessments and institution-wide assessment surveys.

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External Assessments

1. Focus groups and analyses of student newspapers and publications.

Institution-wide Assessment Surveys

1. Freshman and senior surveys, alumni surveys, and the National Survey of Student Engagement.
2. Surveys that track student attitudes, perceptions and understanding of global issues, processes and trends.
3. Student enrollment in foreign language studies.
4. Proposals submitted to/grants received from funding organizations, such as NSF (which has specific international collaboration activities), and the number of students who participate in these grants.

SECTION 6: RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS:

In order to conduct the necessary background research and develop a full QEP document before December 2010, funding for the following will be needed:

- A QEP Planning Committee to examine institutional data and documents, identify potential areas where student learning could be strengthened, present information about the QEP to various academic units, develop preliminary proposals and white papers, and attend bi-weekly meetings.
- Research and writing stipends for members of the white paper subcommittees.
- A QEP Planning Committee Coordinator and an administrative support person to coordinate committee meetings and activities, provide research support, prepare and edit documents, respond to emails, etc.
- A web developer to maintain and make updates to the QEP website to ensure that the Mason community is informed and aware of our process and topic.
- Preliminary assessment of the chosen topic.
- Travel expenses for site visits to other institutions that have successfully implemented the chosen topic; travel expenses and consultation fees for members of successful institutions to visit Mason.
- Publicity and advertising of the QEP and the chosen topic to the Mason community via posters, banners, pamphlets, and other promotional materials.
- Faculty development, including stipends for workshops, teaching and learning events, and sending faculty to conferences.

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- Final editing, printing, and distribution of our 100-page QEP document.

SECTION 7: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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