Proposing Courses for a Mode of Inquiry Designation
Academic Affairs Council (1/14/19 faculty meeting)

Background Information

The new general education system, which begins in the 2019-2020 academic year and affects graduation cohorts of 2023 and onward, features a Modes of Inquiry requirement such that students must complete five courses with distinct approaches to scholarly inquiry prior to their graduation. This element of general education does not prescribe specific content or knowledge areas; instead, this requirement fosters breadth of analytic skills, ranging from critical analysis to scientific reasoning, while promoting conceptual thinking, attention to context, creative production, and reasoning from evidence. Consistent with recommendations from the Bates Institutional Plan that students "acquire habits of inquiry" and be exposed to "ways of knowing" across the humanities, natural sciences and mathematics, social sciences, and interdisciplinary studies, the Modes of Inquiry requirement acknowledges the importance of the entire scope of the liberal arts and ensures additional breadth of education beyond the major and the student's second area of study.

The five Modes of Inquiry are: *Analysis & Critique* [AC], *Creative Process & Production* [CP], *Historical & Social Inquiry* [HS], *Scientific Reasoning* [SR], and *Quantitative & Formal Reasoning* [QF]. Each Mode is defined on the back side of this page, and each definition is accompanied by a brief description of the associated learning goals. In addition to providing opportunities for students to develop facility with the Mode of Inquiry, instructors may encourage students to critically evaluate the values, strengths, and limits of mode-specific methodology. Over the course of their education, students can then reflect on the epistemological differences between varied approaches to constructing knowledge.

Faculty Legislation

Faculty voted in the new General Education plan on March 5, 2018, the documentation of which can be read here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gYa0PQGlX3sVi1Ittv06UpbMzSgr8dxV?ogsrc=32. In addition to establishing and defining the five Modes of Inquiry, the legislation provides these additional details:

- An individual course may satisfy up to two different Mode designations. In other words, it is possible for a course to have zero, one, or two designations. A course's Mode designation(s) will be specified in the college catalog.
- Students cannot double-dip among AC, CP, HS, SR, and QF courses; these requirements must be met by five distinct courses. If an individual course is designated by two different modes of inquiry, the student may elect one mode or the other, but not both simultaneously.
- Students may apply a total of up to two courses from the combined set of courses used to satisfy their major and second area of study ("the major plus one") toward fulfilling the mode of inquiry requirements. Consequently, students must fulfill at least three modes of inquiry from courses outside the major and the second area of study.
- A non-Bates course can be applied to the Modes of Inquiry requirements if it is determined to be a direct equivalent to a Bates course that is already tagged with mode designation(s).

Mode of Inquiry	What is it?	What do students learn?
Analysis & Critique [AC]	This mode examines cultural products and processes to consider how and why meaning is created and contested, arguments are constructed, art is produced, and values are established.	Courses with this designation help students understand how forms of representation create and communicate meaning as they explore the workings of language, rhetoric, informal reasoning, and systems of belief. Students analyze, for example, aesthetic patterns, artistic traditions, philosophical argumentation, and rhetorical strategies to acquire the critical skills to identify and investigate the complex dynamics, norms, beliefs, and agencies at play within cultural products and processes.
Creative Process & Production [CP]	This mode provides the skills requisite for the creation and production process and experiments with ways to express, test, and/or give form to ideas.	Whether making art, composing music, writing creatively, producing film, envisioning the world in a new language, or performing in various ways, courses with this designation enable students to engage with and develop their ideas and imagination. Students enter into a dialogue with past and current practices, reexamining them and gaining an understanding of the fields from a maker's, experimenter's, or performer's point of view.
Historical & Social Inquiry [HS]	This mode of inquiry explores the history and complexity of the individual, human societies, and social interaction, from the intimate to the global, across time and space.	Courses with this designation pay attention to the diverse tools scholars use to examine systematically the way in which humans experience, construct, and behave within the social worlds they inhabit, around the world and across the millennia. They often consider how social structures define and distribute wealth, power, and status among different human populations. As students investigate the bidirectional relationships between individuals and groups, groups and societies, and societies and nations, they note how contextual variables at each level of analysis influence how people understand themselves and others and foster an empathetic understanding of the human condition.
Scientific Reasoning [SR]	Scientific reasoning is an iterative process that uses empirical observations to develop and test theories about the natural world.	Courses with this designation teach students the utility of scientific reasoning when developing explanatory models that unify a broad range of systematic observations. Students explore the process of testing hypotheses and theories by comparing predictions to observations. Through activities that may include gathering, analyzing, and interpreting empirical measurements, students learn the value of reliable data for drawing scientific conclusions.
Quantitative & Formal Reasoning [QF]	Quantitative reasoning is the application of basic mathematics and statistics to interpret data, draw conclusions, and solve real-world problems. Formal reasoning involves developing, understanding, and manipulating symbols based on an explicit set of rules.	Courses with this designation sharpen students' facility with numerical, logic, and other symbolic systems. By applying basic mathematics and analysis tools (e.g., graphing, simple statistics), students learn to extract meaning from real-world data. Experience with formal systems such as logic, computer programming, and mathematical proofs hones students' ability to make valid deductions in abstract contexts and sound judgments in everyday life. Learning how and when to engage explicit rules for decision-making will enable students to formulate and assess quantitative arguments and logical constructions.

Overview of Past and Current Implementation Steps

In order to be ready for the summer 2019 enrollment period for incoming first-year students, courses must be tagged in the college catalog with Mode of Inquiry designations no later than May 1, 2019. Working backward from that deadline, the AAC established an implementation schedule that began with the creation of checklist criteria for each Mode of Inquiry, the intention being that these criteria will assist faculty in determining which of their courses might satisfy a Mode of Inquiry requirement. Each checklist features 8 different criteria; the AAC will decide upon a threshold (i.e., how many of the 8 criteria a course needs to meet in order to satisfy a Mode) for each mode checklist in early March 2019. These checklists were developed and refined between April and November 2018, by means of the following process:

1. AAC shared initial draft at monthly Chairs meeting; solicited feedback
2. AAC revised checklist, then circulated updated copy to all faculty via email
3. Chairs discussed updated checklist with department/program colleagues; Chairs reported colleagues' feedback to the AAC
4. AAC finalized the checklist based on faculty feedback

With checklist items finalized in November 2018, a team consisting of members of the AAC, Dean of Faculty's Office, Registrar, and Office of Systems Development & Integration began developing a user interface in Garnet Gateway for faculty to signal which of their existing courses are relevant to the five Modes of Inquiry. A demonstration of this Garnet Gateway module will be provided at the January 2019 faculty meeting. Following that meeting, we will enter a six-week period in which faculty are asked to use the module to mark the checklist criteria that each of their courses satisfy for up to two Modes of Inquiry per course. In early March 2019, the AAC will collect and use these data to determine what an appropriate threshold should be for course designation purposes; a checklist threshold that is set too high runs the risk of yielding an insufficient number of courses to implement this general education requirement, whereas a checklist threshold that is set too low runs the risk of designating courses too broadly, thus undermining the integrity of the Modes.

The AAC will report to the faculty in early April 2019 its decision about checklist thresholds, and faculty will be notified which of their courses meet the threshold for a Mode designation. After the checklist thresholds are announced, there will be a brief period during which faculty can, if they wish, adjust their Mode of Inquiry checklist selections; this could happen, for example, if faculty feel they can make small adjustments to their syllabi so as to warrant checking off additional criteria. As of May 1, 2019, the courses that satisfy a Mode of Inquiry will be finalized so that they can be included in the Preliminary 2019-2020 college catalog in time for the summer 2019 registration period of the incoming first-year class.

Key Information about the Checklist Endorsing Process

- Faculty will have approximately six weeks to use the module to mark the checklist criteria relevant to their courses. This period runs from January 15 to March 1, 2019. Periodic reminder emails will go out during this time.

- Given that an individual course cannot ultimately carry more than two different Mode designations, the module in Garnet Gateway permits you to check off criteria within any two of the five Modes. If you endorse criteria on two different checklists and then decide that a

different Mode is more applicable, you must erase entries in one of the first two checklists before you can mark off new criteria in a third Mode. In other words, the module permits you to endorse checklist criteria in a maximum of two different Modes.

- The module in Garnet Gateway automatically saves your data each time a change is made. You can log into the module and make changes as many times as you wish within the six week period between January 15 and March 1, 2019. After this time, the system will close so that the AAC can examine the outcomes and make a final determination about the threshold.

- The courses that should appear when you log into this module of Garnet Gateway are those you have taught within the last four years and are currently active courses. First-year seminars, as long as they are currently active courses, will appear on faculty's lists given that these courses, as a category, are eligible for Mode designation. However, existing course numbers that are associated with thesis (often numbered 457 and 458) or independent studies (numbered 360 and s50) are automatically excluded from the lists given the highly individualized nature of student work associated with these course credits. If your list in the Garnet Gateway module is missing a course that you were expecting to see, please be in touch with the Registrar's Office so that the error can be fixed.

- If there are multiple faculty who have taught the same course within the last four years span, each of those faculty will be able to review and endorse checklist criteria in their respective Garnet Gateway systems. Likewise, if a course is co-taught, both faculty associated with the course will be able to review and endorse checklist criteria in their respective Garnet Gateway systems. Data about the same course that are provided by multiple faculty will be saved separately. If/when there are significant discrepancies in number of checklist endorsements among multiple instructors of the same course, the AAC will be in touch with those instructors to troubleshoot the situation.

- Courses that are considered by the Registrar to be current but for whom the instructor on record is no longer at Bates (e.g., past visiting faculty) will appear on the list of courses accessible by the chair of the relevant department or program. Cross-listed or INDS courses that fall into this category will appear on the Garnet Gateway lists for each relevant chair. For situations in which multiple chairs are reviewing and endorsing checklist criteria for the same course, the data provided by each chair will be saved separately. For courses that are unlikely to be offered again at Bates, chairs have the option to designate the course as 'not applicable' by de-selecting it in the Garnet Gateway module.

- During the six-week window from January 15 to March 1, 2019, chairs will receive a weekly automatic email that summarizes checklist-endorsing activity for courses that are listed for their department or program. Information about cross-listed or INDS-listed courses will be included in these weekly updates and sent to all relevant chairs associated with the course.

Questions You Might Have About the Mode of Inquiry Checklist Process

1. **Not all of my courses appear in the Garnet Gateway checklist module. What should I do?**
   If a course you were expecting to see does not appear, please contact the Registrar's Office so that the situation can be resolved.

2. **Why can I propose my course as counting for only up to two different Modes of Inquiry?**
   The faculty legislation from March 5, 2018 makes the stipulation that an individual Bates course can maximally be tagged with two different Modes. Therefore, it is possible for a course to carry 0, 1, or 2 Mode of Inquiry tags but no more than 2.

3. **What if I don't want my course to carry any Mode designation?**
   You do not have to tag your course with a Mode designation. As stated above, it is possible for a course to carry 0, 1, or 2 Mode designations.

4. **Can half-credit courses be considered for a Mode designation?**
   Yes. Students must complete a minimum of 1.0 credit in each of the five Modes of Inquiry, and students can opt to combine two eligible 0.5-credit courses in order to satisfy the minimum of 1.0 credit per Mode.

5. **How can I propose a new/future course for Mode designation?**
   A module in Garnet Gateway will be created for this purpose. More details about that are forthcoming.

6. **Which courses are most ideal to propose for a Mode of Inquiry designation?**
   Given that the spirit of this feature of general education is to encourage early exposure to different approaches of knowledge construction, it is ideal for entering students to have access to a range of courses that are Mode-designated. Courses that are easiest to access are those with few or no prerequisites, which also includes FYS courses. However, given that students have all four years of college to complete the requirement, it is also worthwhile for faculty to propose upper-level courses for Mode designations. Furthermore, given that students may apply up to two courses from their combined major and second area of study (i.e., a GEC, minor, or second major) toward the Modes of Inquiry requirement, students will benefit by having opportunity to pursue upper-level courses that are Mode-designated.

7. **How will students keep track of their progress toward completing the Modes requirement?**
   In addition to regular consultation with their faculty academic adviser, students have access to DegreeAudit, which can be found in Garnet Gateway under the Student Information menu. DegreeAudit gives students a complete profile of their progress toward completing graduation requirements. DegreeAudit updates automatically with each registration change, and there is a "what-if" feature to see how progress would change if a particular course, major, minor, or GEC were undertaken.

8. **Can students elect the pass/fail option for a Mode of Inquiry course?**
   No. Given that all general education requirements at Bates must be taken for a letter grade, students cannot elect the pass/fail option for a course that is to be counted as fulfilling a Mode of Inquiry. Furthermore, students must earn a passing grade (D- or better) in order for a Modes-designated course to be applied toward the graduation requirement.