

University of Louisville  
Ideas to Action  
Culminating Undergraduate Experience Defining Features

In its QEP, “Ideas to Action: Using Critical Thinking to Foster Student Learning and Community Engagement,” the University of Louisville outlined its intention to require every undergraduate to apply critical thinking skills in a culminating undergraduate experience such as:

- capstone course
- service learning project
- research project
- internship
- practicum
- student teaching semester

The defining features of a culminating undergraduate experience are that it:

1. Is undertaken after **sufficient academic preparation** e.g., after completion of at least 90 credits of coursework or key prerequisite courses.
2. Is part or all of an **approved or accepted**:
  - a. credit-bearing course in the major or
  - b. experience in the discipline/major(e.g., honors project or independent study).The unit/department has the responsibility for designing the culminating undergraduate experience.
3. Provides the opportunity for demonstration of the **student’s mastery** of content, **reflection** on accumulated content and experiences, and the **integration** and **application** of critical thinking skills
4. Addresses an **authentic issue**. Authenticity includes meaningful, real-world issues, problems or concerns that are relevant to the learner and the discipline and are shaped by practical constraints of time, space, or resources.
5. Incorporates **ongoing, comprehensive feedback** from students, faculty or others involved with the experience (which may include mid-term or final student evaluation, periodic review by department faculty, feedback from internship/practicum sites, or other assessment measures).
6. Results in an **output that can be assessed** by internal or external reviewers using evaluation criteria favored by the discipline. Examples of outputs include a paper, portfolio, or performance

#### Resources

Eight Principles of Good Practice for All Experiential Learning Activities

[http://www.nsee.org/about\\_us.htm](http://www.nsee.org/about_us.htm)

Glossary of “Learning” Terms <http://www.cetl.gatech.edu/resources/learningterms.pdf>

Huber, M. & Hutchings, P. (2004). *Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

i2a website <http://louisville.edu/ideastoaction>