Helpful Hints/Recommendations from the OTM Arts and Humanities Panel

January 11, 2010

Common Reasons for Disapproval

Courses are most often disapproved because they:

- are not primarily focused on one or more of the humanities disciplines: art, music, theatre, film, history of dance, literature, religion, philosophy, ethics, or history.
- do not demonstrate that students will employ methods of inquiry typical of one or more humanities disciplines.
- are not general education courses typical of the first two years of the college experience. For example, remedial, developmental, and upper-division courses are not appropriate for the TM.
- do not span broad historical periods, regions, and/or cultures.
- are too narrowly focused.
- are technical courses.
- primarily serve to develop skills necessary for a particular major. For example, studio art, music performance, theatre skills, creative writing, and symbolic logic courses will not be approved as part of the Arts and Humanities TM.

Preparing Materials for Submission

In order to judge whether courses meet the guidelines for the Arts and Humanities TM, faculty reviewers look most closely at working syllabi, or typical syllabi that would be distributed to students. While standard institutional or departmental course information is useful, it is essential that faculty reviewers also have access to syllabi that show the types of learning activities that actually take place in the courses.

The most common problem with submissions is that syllabi lack sufficient detail for reviewers to determine course content. Course outlines should contain:

- specific topics and readings to be covered (not just chapter numbers).
- descriptions of the assignments students will complete (not just titles of the assignments).
- clear demonstration that students will be performing one or more of the TM learning outcomes, including the methods of inquiry typical of the humanities disciplines. One major commonality among the humanities disciplines is student interaction with primary sources, which may include works of art, music, film, dance, literature, or philosophy.

History Courses

Some institutions classify history as part of the humanities, while others group it with the social sciences. In order to approve history courses as part of the Arts and Humanities TM, reviewers expect topics and assignments that demonstrate a strong humanities approach, described as “the study of human endeavors” in the TM guidelines. History courses approved for the Arts and Humanities TM normally achieve this goal through the inclusion of primary sources, especially those related to the history of the arts, literature, philosophy, religion, and ideas.