Questions, Not Answers: A Process-based Curriculum in the Liberal Arts and Sciences

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Throughout most of history, information has been limited, difficult to access, and expensive. In the last decade, this situation has been radically reversed: information is now virtually unlimited, ubiquitous, and free. As one consequence of this revolution, the twenty-first century economy rewards those who ask insightful questions, not those who can parrot answers. Quest University Canada began with a blank slate in order to design an institution for this new millennium. We have no faculty ranks, no departments, and no majors. All classes are seminars and meet on the Block Plan in which students take one class at a time for a month. The first two years of the program consists of required courses in mathematics, the physical sciences, life sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, and language. In March of the second year, students have a month to formulate an individual Question that will guide their work for the next two years, including choosing a faculty advisor with whom to work one-on-one, a set of seminal books/papers to read, a set of courses to take, and a required experiential learning experience outside the academy. The Question culminates in a thesis-length work and a presentation to the entire University during the student's final week. The result is an education ranked number 1 in North America by the National Survey of Student Engagement, and graduates who are excelling in leading graduate and professional programs and in a wide variety of careers. Lessons learned from Quest's first eight years will be presented.