

Fall 2017
Core Curriculum Assessment Report

of

Skills 1 – Communication

from the

Communication - Written

Core Curricular Area



submitted by

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on behalf of the

Communication - Written
Core Area Assessment Committee

Methods

How was student work (artifacts) collected for assessment?

Our instructors upload online portfolios for every student via Google Forms, which gathers them into a master spreadsheet of roughly 700-1,000 portfolios. We collect portfolios from every lecturer and TA.

What type of artifacts were collected?

Online student portfolios that contain major papers and reflection statements.

How were the artifacts sampled for assessment?

We use systematic random sampling (Datallo 2008), selecting every fourth portfolio from the master spreadsheet. Doing so results in a sample size of roughly 20 percent. (150-200 portfolios). We apply the same sampling method to concurrent artifacts. Best practices in sample-size calculation holds that for a population of 1000, we must sample at least 213 portfolios to achieve a 90 percent confidence interval and 5 percent margin of error. This is necessary to maintain internal validity.

How were the artifacts scored?

We employ “Phase Two” portfolio assessment methods (White 2005), meaning raters read each student’s reflection essay first and then review other documents for evidence to support their assertions about process and revision. Raters then fill out an online multi-trait scoring rubric (Hamp-Lyons 2016) for each student via Google Forms. Starting Fall 2017, we are adding a holistic score category that will better enable us to track interrater reliability.

How was reliability in scoring determined and ensured?

In addition to a calibration session before live scoring, we use an adjudicated scoring method. Each portfolio receives scoring from two raters. If the holistic scores deviate then the portfolio receives a third “tie breaker” reading from the chief reader, a role filled either by the Director

of Composition or another composition specialist. All adjudications are recorded.

Reflection

What was learned from the assessment results?

Proficiency rates for 1311 were stable, roughly 40 percent in all but one category. The lowest proficiency rate appeared in revision and reflection (29 percent). Roughly 30 percent of students scored in the developing range in each category.

Proficiency rates for this RHET 1311 assessment cycle were 10-15 percent lower than the previous three semesters. For the Comp I scoring, we had to schedule a separate session with 2 raters in mid June. Our sample size was admittedly small, due to the limited availability of raters. Therefore, these results may not be as reliable as prior assessments in which the sample size was larger, and we had more raters availability.

Other issues could explain this dip. First, our instructors reported frequent problems with our main LMS (Blackboard) throughout the semester. These issues disrupted regular classroom procedures. We also encountered a major issue with storage space on Google Sites at the end of the semester.

Proficiency rates for RHET 1312 were much higher and aligned with results from prior assessment cycles. Between 50 and 60 percent of students scored in the proficient or advanced range across all categories.

Revision and reflection remains the biggest challenge for students, teachers, and raters. Reflection essays are difficult for students to write, because it is an unusual genre. Furthermore, it can often be difficult to ensure all students are setting permissions accurately on their Google Sites, so that teachers and raters can view the documents. Although we could exclude non-working portfolios from our samples, we feel it is important to know roughly how many portfolios have these kinds of issues.

Continuous Improvement

What changes will be made based upon the assessment results?

We have already implemented a number of curricular improvements to help boost student performance on this area.

First, we have encouraged all instructors to adopt the New Google sites, which is easier to manage and results in better web layout.

Second, we are distributing video tutorials and other guides to help ensure everyone knows how to manage sharing settings in Google Documents and Drive.

Third, we are developing instructor resources to place a greater emphasis on the reflection essay. At our annual composition program orientation in August, we discussed ways of building reflection into the course throughout the semester using Google blogs as writing and revision journals. We are also prompting instructors and students to make use of Google Drive's "revision history" feature, which will give them a more detailed record of the major and minor changes they make to their papers, as well as how they respond to instructor and peer review comments.

Feedback

What changes are recommended for Core assessment?

1. We need to assess only one course per semester in order to obtain acceptable sample sizes. With the addition of concurrent courses, we have too many artifacts to assess if we try to score 2 different courses. Trying to assess everything every semester isn't sustainable. For us, it makes no difference whether we assess 1 outcome or several. That doesn't change the actual number of artifacts we look at, and it has no impact on the time investment.
2. We need the core council to loosen its requirements for score reporting. The template you've provided isn't usable the way we conduct scores and analyze information. Honestly, I don't know how you use that template to generate usable statistics. Furthermore, I don't have time to manually transpose the information into this template from my spreadsheets.
3. I don't ever seem to receive follow-up on the reports once submitted. I don't know if anyone reads or takes my recommendations seriously. I've made the same recommendations for almost two years now, and there's never any substantive discussion.

Comments

Other comments?

END OF REPORT