Fall 2017
Core Curriculum Assessment Report

of

Skills 2 – Critical Thinking

from the

Flex: Communication - Spoken and Interdisciplinary
Core Curricular Area

submitted by

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on behalf of the

**Flex: Communication - Spoken and Interdisciplinary
Core Area Assessment Committee**

Methods

How was student work (artifacts) collected for assessment?

BB Outcomes was used to collect 1300 student artifacts. Ninety-nine (99) viable artifacts were identified from the spring 2017 semester.

What type of artifacts were collected?

Informative Service Speech videos

How were the artifacts sampled for assessment?

Eighteen (18%) video artifacts from seven ACOM 1300 sections were randomly selected from the three modes of course offerings. Of those artifacts selected,

Nine (50%) represented three 16-week face-to-face format,
7 (39%) represented two 8-week online format, and
2 (11%) represented two 16-week online format.

While the three modes were collected, the results of the assessment were not reported at the mode level as the sample size in two of the three modes, while representative of the weight of course-mode offerings, was not substantial enough for meaningful assessment.

How were the artifacts scored?

We encountered a problem with the assignment of raters that was not discovered until after reports were generated. Artifacts for Skill 1.1 were assigned two raters, as planned. However, only 12 (67%) artifacts for Skills 1.2 and 2.2 and only 10 (56%) artifacts for Skill 2.1 were assigned two raters. We are unsure why there were inconsistent rater assignments and will need to explore the issues with Blackboard Outcomes support staff.

How was reliability in scoring determined and ensured?

After retooling rubrics to meet the Core Council expectation of a 4 benchmark, the members of the CAAC committee (Kristen McIntyre, Katie Halford, Melissa Johnston, and Cheryl Johnston), in addition to a visiting Assistant Professor teaching ACOM 1300 (Vincent Manzie) and Communication Skill Center graduate assistant (Sayra Crandall), for a total of six (6) CAAC raters, participated in norming activities.

The norming process included scoring past course artifacts (Informative Service Speech videos) and talking through individual evaluative elements as a group. Throughout the process, rubric value descriptions were clarified to provide clearer differentiation between scores.

The following are interrater reliability results for each Skill outcome:

Interrater reliability was attained for 3 (17%) artifacts for Skill 1.1.
Interrater reliability was attained for 15 (83%) artifacts for Skill 1.2.
Interrater reliability was attained for 17 (94%) artifacts for Skill 2.1.
Interrater reliability was attained for 14 (78%) artifacts for Skill 2.2.

Due to time constraints, no third raters were assigned for this report. Scores for each artifact rated twice were averaged. Scores for single-rated artifacts were also included.

Reflection

What was learned from the assessment results?

Per the expectation of the Core Council communicated via our Core Council liaison's email August 22, 2017, a rubric score of 4 is the goal for a student completing ACOM 1300. Specifically, the CAAC committee interpreted a 4 as "competent understanding," a 3 as "beginning level of understanding," a 2 as "tentative understanding," 1 as "lack of understanding," and 0 as "incomplete work or different assignment submitted."

Skill 2.1. The percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher on components of adapting messages included use of language (89%) and communication orientation (90%). However, the averages of the sampled ACOM 1300 students indicated they were not approaching the benchmark of a 4, on average. Students did approach the benchmark in both use of language (3.4) and communication orientation (3.2). Specifically, the sampled students are able to use language that is respectful and appropriate for their audience overall, as well as exhibit delivery behaviors that are not distracting from the message.

Skill 2.2. The percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher on components of understanding communication principles included principle identification (79%), principle explanation (67%), principle support (72%), and principle application (77%). However, the averages of the sampled ACOM 1300 students indicated they were not approaching the benchmark of a 4, on average. Only the evaluative element of principle identification (3.3) came close to approaching the benchmark. Two of the evaluative elements, principle support (3.1) and principle application (3.2) reflected a relatively strong level of learning. Sampled students struggled with principle explanation (2.7). Students are able to clearly identify and name a relevant communication principle, provide an oral citation that includes the majority of the required components, and apply the principle in a meaningful way. However, students are not providing a distinct explanation of the principle, separate from the principle statement itself, before applying it to their experiences.

Continuous Improvement

What changes will be made based upon the assessment results?

Curriculum Action Items

The ACOM 1300 program is committed to the continuous improvement process and thus faculty who teach in the program meet monthly to review the curriculum, norm assignment grading, and discuss ideas for activities that help students learn key concepts and skills.

Students' oral citations were missing one of the three required elements: author, date, and/or type. Moving forward, we will need to be more intentional in providing explicit activities related to building and practicing oral citations in a public speaking context.

To help push students to build their ability to synthesize supporting material for principle definitions in the speech, we will also work on emphasizing the skill of paraphrasing supporting material as opposed to directly quoting definitions. This skill is particularly important in a public speaking context as the overuse of direct quotations from sources diminishes not only the voice of the speaker but also the fluency of the speech. We will need to continue to explore how we're framing the use of supporting material, as well as the activities we have in place, in order to better facilitate student learning in this area.

Assessment Method Action Items

This is the second time ACOM 1300 has used Blackboard Outcomes for Core assessment. Overall, we continue to find the platform extremely useful. We no longer have to worry about collecting and housing artifacts each semester. The ease of using a single attempt dropbox for artifact collection has dramatically improved the assessment process by both convenience and consistency.

While there are many positive attributes of the platform, we will need to problem-solve the inconsistency of rater assignments to artifacts. Each artifact was to have two raters, yet not all artifacts received two raters and the assignment of dual raters was inconsistent across rubrics.

Finally, the scoring team will need to continue to engage in norming processes to improve interrater reliability moving forward.

Feedback

What changes are recommended for Core assessment?

The expectation to shift Core benchmarks to a 4 has proven to be highly problematic. First and foremost, the fine level of differentiation needed to distinguish the scores has proven nearly impossible to norm reliably, particularly with more robust rubrics necessary for making the assessment process meaningful for continuous curriculum improvement.

Second, the expectation of 4 as the benchmark for a student finishing the core course makes the use of core course assessment for program assessment difficult at best. In order to align program assessment rubrics with core rubrics, programs are now obligated to build at least a 6 point scale to include a milestone and benchmark in the major, making norming and interrater reliability an onerous task.

However, as the results spreadsheet provided by the Core Council to report data indicates, a 4 represents an advanced level of learning, a 3 proficient, a 2 novice, and a 1 not met. We're assuming these scores have not been updated to reflect the expectation of a 4 as the goal for a student finishing a core course. However, these four scores better match to a core-program scale alignment, with a 2 representing a student at the end of a core course, a 3 mid-major, and a 4 graduating senior. Going back to this scoring method used on a rubric would be helpful to achieve intercoder reliability, as well as allow programs to use the rubrics for both core and program assessment.

Finally, the perception that a student leaving a core class has anything but a novice knowledge base and skill set is dangerously and unfairly overselling what our curriculum is realistically able to achieve in 16 weeks. For these reasons, we strongly encourage the Core Council to reconsider the problematic use of a 4 as the goal benchmark.

Comments

Other comments?

END OF REPORT