

Spring 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?

We collect digital portfolios from 1311, 1312, and 1320 every semester per the Core Council's request. Instructors upload links to their students' work through a Google Form.

What type of artifacts were collected?

We collect digital portfolios from students in composition courses. These portfolios contain polished versions of their major writing assignments, along with drafts and reflection essays on their revision process and what written communication skills they developed.

How were the artifacts sampled for assessment?

We take a random sample of ideally 20 percent of the portfolios from each course. This semester, we sampled roughly 30 portfolios from RHET 1311, and an additional 30 from RHET 1312. There is only 1-2 sections of 1320, so we collect a much smaller sample of that course and one person rates.

How were the artifacts scored?

A group of 4-6 instructors meet for a full day of assessment starting at 9 am. We begin with an overview of the learning outcomes and objectives for the courses. The composition director distributes the 1311 portfolios among 2-3 raters, and 1312 portfolios among the other 2-3 raters.

How was reliability in scoring determined and ensured?

On assessment day, we review outcomes and objectives and then calibrate to them by scoring a small batch of portfolios set aside from the live sample. If the raters reach consensus during calibration, we proceed to live scoring. If there are disagreements between the raters, then we continue calibrating. The composition director spot checks for reliability. We also calculate and

compare rater averages using T-tests. If a rater is scoring significantly above or below their peers, they are retrained before being allowed to participate in subsequent assessment activities. Our practices are based by methods for essay scoring used by ETS and other composition programs.

Reflection

What was learned from the assessment results?

Our proficiency rates for 1311 and 1312 continue to rise since we began assessing with the new rubric in January of 2016. This is our third assessment cycle, and students have improved on all objectives. The lowest proficiency rate was 78 percent, in Information Literacy. We are continuing to work with the Ottenheimer Library to provide research and source evaluation tutorials. We are also working harder to train instructors so they are designing and implementing effective research-based assignments, and also integrating information literacy throughout their curriculum. This way, students are exposed to the importance of source evaluation many times before they begin their research papers. On a final note, I maintain some suspicion of such high proficiency rates. Our January assessment was hurt by a snow day. Instead of trying to reschedule for later in the semester, we conducted our assessment online with a very limited amount of calibration. I'm convinced that if we had calibrated as thoroughly as we did the last two cycles, the proficiency rates would have been slightly lower. Also: If we could move to a model of assessing just 1311 in the fall and 1312 in the spring, we would be able to score a much wider sample for each course and generate even more accurate, precise data. I think this strategy would still satisfy the accrediting commissions. As we proceed with our basic assessments, I do plan on reading through more portfolios myself in order to supplement our assessment reports with qualitative data on students' writing.

Continuous Improvement

What changes will be made based upon the assessment results?

As mentioned previously, we are continued our partnership with the library to ensure that our instructors are designing effective research-based assignments and incorporation information literacy into multiple units and projects. The composition program has already worked with the library to develop online tutorials in source evaluation and library database use. We want to make these resources easier for instructors to embed in their courses. Toward this end, I have put them on an open access website that they can simply link to. The library is also making plans to develop a "Lib Guide" that would house a number of videos, written tutorials, and worksheets. One thing I have not mentioned yet: In addition to my regular review of instructor syllabi, I have also started requesting a much more detailed course calendar with assignment descriptions from instructors. These documents will provide opportunities for more effective feedback and mentoring.

Feedback

What changes are recommended for Core assessment?

I like this Google form for the report. Standardizing the reporting process has made this easier and less time-consuming. On the other hand, the template is not very well suited to our assessment process. We use Google Forms to conduct our assessments, and so a spreadsheet is automatically generated with raw scores, one that allows me to calculate proficiency rates. It would be extremely time consuming for me to manually transcribe that data into the Core Council's template in its current form. Also, I am confused about why people are only assessing one or two outcomes every semester. Is this really true? Our program has designed a rubric that measures for multiple outcomes every cycle. This leads to consistent, reliable information. If you're assessing different outcomes every cycle, then I don't see how you can really monitor improvement over time. Maybe I'm missing something.

Comments

Other comments?

END OF REPORT