

**Spring 2017**  
**Core Curriculum Assessment Report**

of

**Knowledge 2 - Arts and Humanities**

from the

**Humanities**

Core Curricular Area



submitted by

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on behalf of the

**Humanities**

**Core Area Assessment Committee**

## Methods

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### **How was student work (artifacts) collected for assessment?**

The CAAC members worked with instructors of the various sections to collect artifacts. We provided them information about Knowledge 2.1 and 2.2 so that they may choose a fitting assignment to submit. In English, we attempted to collect artifacts from every section of every modality (and succeeded with the exception of a couple of concurrent sections), and in Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies, they chose randomly selected specific sections for artifact collection. In both departments we requested artifacts from all of the modalities represented (3 in English, 2 in Philosophy), but Philosophy was unable to collect online artifacts for PHIL 2320 Ethics and Society due to an unresponsive instructor who was teaching the majority of online sections and whose section had been selected. They were also unable to collect any artifacts for RELS 2305 World Religions because the instructor of the sole section offered in Fall 2016 was not responsive to multiple requests for the materials. World Religions was only offered in 1 section in Fall 2016, so that was the only data possible to collect (and prior to Fall 2016 it was not a course approved for the Humanities core, so older materials were not acceptable substitutes). Once collected, the artifacts were digitally uploaded to Google Drive and shared with the full committee. Individual folders were created within the shared Humanities Core folder for each instructor, and separate folders were created for the artifacts that were culled from each instructor using a random number generator.

### **What type of artifacts were collected?**

Short papers, quizzes, essay questions from exams, short answer assignments, and timed essays.

Instructors of the selected sections decided which artifacts to submit; we provided guidance and explanation for the Knowledge area at departmental meetings, email instructions, and classroom observation of concurrent courses. With the concurrent teachers in English, we did offer a pre-made assignment if they were unsure what would count (a poem and a quiz that would match up with some of their AP requirements), but no one used this particular assignment.

## **How were the artifacts sampled for assessment?**

The CAAC members met to organize sampling based on the different methods of collection--taking into consideration the lack of materials for the modality of online Ethics and Society. For English, the committee randomly selected 3 artifacts from each of the 18 sections for a total of 54 artifacts. For Philosophy, we selected 6 artifacts from each modality of the following courses: Ethics and Society (face-to-face), Ethics and Society: Professional Application (face-to-face), for a total of 12 artifacts. Artifacts were culled using a random number generator to select specific artifacts from each group.

## **How were the artifacts scored?**

We used a rubric that had been developed and revised by the Humanities CAAC in 2015-2016; they used it (or a similar version) for the pilot of the Knowledge area in spring 2016. Because the final reporting sheet provided by Core Council uses a 5-point scale, we had to change our rubric at the last minute back to an older version that was also a 5-point scale. We divided the CAAC members into 2 groups (cross-department pairings) and then divided the artifacts between the 2 groups. Each member scored the artifacts for their group and then the report writer compiled the final tally of results.

## **How was reliability in scoring determined and ensured?**

The rubric used was developed and piloted by the Humanities CAAC in 2015-2016. Before the CAAC sub-groups scored any artifacts, we held a norming meeting to discuss our scores of a random set of artifacts (across modalities and across the 2 departments). We discussed in particular how to distinguish between the 1 "Not Met" and the 0 "Absent" category, based on discussions with our Core Council liaison and on our general sense of the artifacts. This norming meeting and discussion helped ensure inter-rater reliability, and it resulted in a discussion of implicit and explicit evidence in student work.

## Reflection

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### What was learned from the assessment results?

1) An important finding from the results is that scores are much higher for LO 2.1 (understand foundational concepts and methods in a particular humanistic discipline) than for 2.2 (understand cultural and historical contexts as they inform philosophical, literary, and other texts.). On LO 2.1 we found 6 Advanced and 20 Proficient; conversely, for LO 2.2, we found 3 Advanced and only 9 Proficient. The difference was primarily attributable to the type of work students were asked to do, not in the quality of their work. That is, this numerical finding matches with what we discovered as we looked more deeply at the collected artifacts and the assignments that generated them: at least when it comes to a single artifact, the focus is more on understanding and using concepts and methods and less on issues related to historical and cultural context. This was true across disciplines. We believe that, given the nature of these courses, it is unlikely that a single assignment will ask students to explicitly demonstrate both types of knowledge. Instead, the historical/cultural aspects seemed to be more implicit in the assignments collected (and in some, to be distinctly lacking due to the type of assignment). This finding suggests that we need to re-think our LOs for the Knowledge area and how they work together under the larger Goal; this may also suggest that we need to consider different types of artifacts that could lead to explicit demonstration of both. It may be that these two LOs would need to be weighted differentially or that equal demonstration could occur only with 2 different artifacts used. Nevertheless, at this time we are reluctant to consider adding another artifact to evaluate simply for LO 2.2, and feel instead that a re-working of the current LOs would be better. After all, we want our assessment to reflect what is actually going on in our classes rather than being directive as to what specific kinds of assignments must be used by instructors. In broad survey courses, where the learning is cumulative and different types of assignments draw out different aspects along the way, it's important to understand that a single artifact is unlikely to capture the entirety of the breadth of "Knowledge." In fact, the CAAC report from 2015-2016 reached a similar conclusion.

2) In the English area, we observed a rather large difference between the artifacts collected from concurrent courses and those collected from the other 2 modalities. There was a broader array of in-class writing assignments and quizzes in concurrent courses, and this is one place we saw the difficulty with LO2. In the future, we will need to work more closely with these instructors to select artifacts that will work better for the Knowledge area. Looking at the syllabi, it's clear in some cases that other assignments could work.

In the Philosophy area, there appeared to be a significant difference in student performance in

PHIL 2321 Ethics and Society: Professional Applications compared to PHIL 2320 Ethics and Society. While students in PHIL 2320 did not achieve beyond Novice(2) in both LO 2.1 and LO 2.2, some students achieved Advanced (4) and Proficient (3) in PHIL 2321. The difference is likely due to the difference in assessment type. The artifacts from PHIL 2321 were full papers, while the artifacts from PHIL 2320 were short answer questions from a quiz. In the future, we will need to ensure selected artifacts are similar enough such that more meaningful comparisons across courses can be made.

3) In our scoring, the committee noted that there were at least three different situations where we scored an artifact as 0 or “absent.” In the first case, the student work could be missing altogether. In the second case, there were significant issues with the artifact that led committee members to deem the artifact as too difficult to evaluate. In the third case, the skill/knowledge was lacking in student work to the point of being judged absent (which may be reflective of the type of assignment given, cf. above regarding LO2). The latter could have been deemed “not met” instead, but it feels odd to say that a paper, for example, “didn’t meet” a learning objective that was clearly not a part of the assignment. We decided to make a firm distinction and not generously read history or culture into artifacts that didn’t explicitly include it. This accounts somewhat for the higher number of 1s on LO2 and for the 0s that are given when it wasn’t simply a matter of missing or illegible artifacts. Finally, we could have added in the missing online philosophy section and counted them all as “absent” (as well as for the missing online World Religions). We decided not to do that and to use our “absent” category in a way that varied between the 3 above options.

## Continuous Improvement

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### What changes will be made based upon the assessment results?

Some of this was discussed on page 4 (“Reflection”) and so we will only add further points here, letting those answers stand as part of Continuous Improvement as well.

1) We have learned that we need to have a more consistent collection method across the two departments (5 courses). We have also learned that we need to work a little more with concurrent instructors on appropriate determining artifacts (described in detail above). At our next meeting we plan to discuss how to avoid these kinds of situations for our next assessment (Skills area). We also learned that while using Google Drive for the collection and organization of the artifacts was helpful, we will need to attempt to get the instructors from the selected sections to submit their artifacts directly to the assessment folder following specific naming and grouping protocols. Over six hours of committee work was expended scanning, organizing, and labeling artifacts in the shared Google Drive.

2) As described previously, we need to talk with our faculty about how the Knowledge learning outcomes and learning objectives are written and come to a resolution on what’s best for the next step. These discussions should happen in and across the two departments currently in the Humanities core. This could entail changing the LO or changing the rubric, adding another rubric for LO2, or requesting a more cumulative assignment directed at generating a more holistic artifact. However, what we have discovered isn’t that it just so happens that the assignments don’t cover both areas fully, but rather that it may be against our actual pedagogical practices to have them do so and that they may be best addressed separately or that one aspect is truly more central to a core course than the other. We noted that some writing assignments were very well written and strong at what they did, and yet their score was a 2, i.e., not reflective of the excellence shown. Again, this may be rubric design or wording of the LOs, but a deeper discussion in both departments and collectively is needed to learn more. When it comes to a “Knowledge” area, there is much that can be included, but we have to remember that we are evaluating a lower-level introductory course and be clear about not only what is possible but what is most germane for a core education in the humanities area. In English, we are currently revising our major program goals and objectives as well, so this discussion dovetails nicely with that work.

3) When we assess for the Skills and Values areas in the future, we will be using the generic rubrics along with all the other CAACs. It will be interesting to see how those work out and what we might learn from using and interpreting them for future revision of our Knowledge

rubric.

## **Feedback**

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### **What changes are recommended for Core assessment?**

The Core Council is aware of the arguments that the humanities CAAC has made over the last semester for greater flexibility in amending specific learning objectives to better align with the learning objectives and assignments we are seeing as we engage in the process of continuous improvement. We thank the committee for being responsive to our concerns and support the legislation that will come before the Faculty Senate in February. We will work closely with our core liaison to revise our learning objectives in a way that is consistent with the Core Council's objectives and vision, program goals and practices, as well as best practices in rubric design.

## **Comments**

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### **Other comments?**

We appreciate the wonderful cooperation, guidance, and patience provided by our liaison, Michael DeAngelis. The spreadsheet and report form were very well constructed. It seems key to have consistent reporting mechanisms like this.

**END OF REPORT**