

**Report from the Core Council to the Faculty Senate on Core Assessment 2015-2016**

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5-6-16

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**Introduction**

This report covers progress on Core Assessment for academic year 2015-2016. A description of the core is included in Appendix A. The Core Council is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate and has the charge of overseeing core assessment (see Appendix B for the charge).

Work on core assessment started in 2014-2015 (Appendix C). Core Area Assessment committees were established for each curricular area and one member of the Core Council was appointed to serve as a liaison and serve as the communication link between the CAAC and Core Council. (See Appendix D)

During 2015-2016 each curricular area was asked to pilot rubrics developed in Spring 2015 for assessing their Knowledge goal(s). Rhetoric and Writing and Speech communication were assigned the first skills goal. The purpose of the pilot was to test the rubrics and to develop processes that could be followed for future assessments. See Appendix E for the instructions to each CAAC outlining this process.

Each CAAC was asked to submit a report describing the pilot results. Representatives of each CAAC met with the Core Council in Spring 2016 and following those meetings each liaison wrote a brief report answering common questions to facilitate comparisons across reports. These reports also include course enrollments for Spring, Summer, and Fall 2015. The liaisons reports are included in Appendix F and the CAAC reports are included in Appendix G.

The timeline for future assessment is included in Appendix H.

**What We Learned About Core Assessment in 2015-2016**

Overall: A remarkable amount of progress has occurred over the course of a 2-year period. The core assessment process is faculty led and faculty driven which is in line with the charge from the Faculty Senate. Our core assessment process is consistent with the Higher Learning Commission's emphasis on "a culture of continuous improvement"

Rubrics-All groups reported success using the rubrics to score student work. Math mentioned modifying the wording of the rubric to aid in scoring. Speech mentioned adding more detail to the rubric to facilitate better identification of student strengths and weaknesses. All groups were able to successfully rate using the 4-point scale (however, note comment under issues below)

Participation: The majority of the programs participated and are making steady progress on assessment. Some programs chose not to participate (Music) and some programs participated minimally (some of the Social Sciences). Part of the charge of the Core Council is to develop a re-approval process for core courses. One of the criteria for re-approval will be satisfactory participation in the core assessment process.

Selection of student work: The Core Council recommended that sections of core courses be randomly selected for assessment and that the selection occur after the start of the semester. This was to ensure that there was no “teaching to the test.”

This worked better for some groups than others. Several groups used random number generators to select sections. However, other groups did not select randomly. In some cases it was challenging to get instructors unfamiliar with assessment to submit artifacts that could be scored using the rubrics. Several groups expressed concerns over how this would work with concurrent courses and adjuncts. There are also cases in which there is only one section of a course.

The Core Council continues to recommend that sections of core courses be randomly selected for assessment and that the selection occur after the start of the semester.

Raters: CAACs reported a wide variety in the types of individuals who rated the student work including adjuncts, graduate students, and full-time faculty. In most cases, except for CAACs with only one program in the curricular, area raters were outside the discipline. The Core Council requested that the raters come from outside the discipline, when possible, based on the assumption that if the rubrics and assignment instructions were well written then a rater outside the discipline could objectively rate the student work.

Compensation for Raters: Some groups were able to pay a small stipend to raters and others recommended it. See recommendations below under Compensation and Faculty Role.

Reliability- Reliability of raters is necessary for confidence in the assessment results. Many, but not all curricular areas, reported reliability. Reliability needs to be a priority in the next assessment cycle.

Types of assignments-Common rubrics can be applied to many types of assignments and the CAACs put that to the test. Multiple choice, fill in the blank, lab reports, papers, problem questions, final essays, electronic portfolio with multiple assignments, and video recordings were all used. The main issue was the alignment of the assignment with the learning objectives and not whether the rubric could be used with a wide variety of assignments.

Time estimates -Time estimates ranged from 2 minutes to 15 minutes to score the work of one student. The estimates depended on the type of student work. The Core Council anticipates that with experience these estimates will decline, but we want to continue to track these numbers so we have a rough idea of faculty time required.

### **Issues that Need Further Attention**

Concurrent courses: Some programs have close relationships with their concurrent instructors while others do not. One issue that we face is how to make sure concurrent instructors participate in core assessment and include the relevant learning objectives in their syllabi.

Adjuncts: While some programs included adjuncts in the assessment pilot others did not. In addition, few to no online sections were included. All modalities will need to be included in the future.

Assessment management system: Currently we do not have an electronic assessment system. Without a system issues such as storage, access to student work, and rubric aggregation will need to be addressed.

Rubric scale: All rubrics are currently based on a 1 to 4 scale. We need to clarify the difference between student work that does not reach the threshold for a rating of 1 and work that does. Including both in the same category confounds the comparisons with the other points on the scale. Adding a not scorable category could solve this problem.

Sample size-Both the Humanities and Fine Arts want direction on this issue. The answer is that necessary sample size is directly dependent on the questions that are asked. Lower sample sizes are acceptable if measures are more reliable. See recommendations below.

Student work-Finding an assignment or assignments that aligned with the learning objectives was challenging for some areas. Many groups are considering common assignments for the future. Another potential solution is for instructors to be more intentional in connecting assignments to learning objectives.

In the future all groups will need to have assignments that address the learning objectives. These do not have to be common assignments. Humanities stated that

without a comprehensive final assignment the learning objectives could not be assessed and this problem will need to be addressed in the future. It is necessary to assess the learning outcomes and objectives.

Grades versus assessment: Some confusion over difference in grades versus assessment. Grades and student learning outcomes assessment have different purposes and future faculty development may need to address the differences between grades and assessment.

Pre-post test methodology: Two curricular areas Biology and History mentioned the value of pre and post tests. This methodology could provide valuable information about the change that does or does not take place in the semester. It can also provide information about the reliability of measures that can be used to make estimates about needed sample size.

### **Recommendations for the Future**

Faculty development: Future sessions on faculty development need to cover the relationships between assignments, rubrics, and learning objectives; the difference between grades and assessment,

In addition, the Core Council recommends a faculty development session addressing the issues of reliability, sample size, rubric construction etc. There are several web resources that are relevant and we could tap into campus expertise for the session. Alternatively, we could adopt metric that is commonly used which is 20% of the total sample. The advantage of this metric is it gives an immediate answer and the disadvantage is that the number can be high.

Compensation and Faculty Role: The Core Council, responding in part to questions by members of the CAACs, drafted legislation for the Faculty Senate that addressed the issue of how assessment data is used. The legislation stated that programmatic student outcomes assessment data was not to be used in evaluating individual faculty for promotion, tenure, or annual review. However, participation in assessment activities could be used in evaluation individual faculty for promotion, tenure, or annual review. The chancellor vetoed this legislation, however, he encouraged us to continue to work on the issue and that work will continue next year.

This legislation recognized that participation in assessment is part what is expected of full-time faculty. The Core Council recognizes that compensation might be appropriate in cases in which adjuncts, and graduate students serve as raters of student work. Small amounts of compensation might also be appropriate for full-time faculty who have a heavy assessment workload or are participating in extra training or faculty development. However, it is important that faculty own the assessment process. Whatever system of collecting, analyzing, and implementing

assessment data is adopted in each core program is the responsibility of the entire faculty.

## Appendix A

### *Description of UALR Core*

Implemented January 2015

#### 9 curricular areas

Science

Communication-Written

Fine Arts

Social Sciences

US History/Government

History of Civilization

Humanities

Mathematics

Communication-Speech

The core addresses the following educational goals:

#### Skills

1. Communication (oral, written, visual, second language; professional self-presentation).
2. Critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and solving problems individually and collaboratively.
3. Information technology (locating, retrieving, evaluating, synthesizing).

#### Knowledge

1. The concepts, methodologies, findings, and applications of mathematics and the social and natural sciences, engineering and technology.
2. The concepts, methodologies, and the global cultural heritage of the arts and humanities.

#### Values

1. Ethical behavior and personal responsibility.
2. Civic responsibility.
3. Global and cultural understanding

*Map of Educational Goals Represented in the UALR Core*

Curricular Areas

Educational Goals	Communication-Written	Communication-Speech	Math	Fine Arts	Humanities	Science	Social Sciences	History of Civilization	US Traditions
Knowledge 1: Math & Science			X			X	X	x	x
Knowledge 2: Arts & Humanities				X	X			x	
Skill 1: Communication	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x
Skill 2: Critical Thinking	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x
Skill 3: Info Technology	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x
Value 1: Ethical	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x
Value 2: Civic Responsibility	X	X		x	x	x	x	x	x
Value 3: Global & Cultural			X	x	x		x		

Appendix B  
*Charge of the Core Council*

Leg-FS-2012-13\_11 Council on Core Policies  
Amended March 11,2016

The UALR Council on Core Curriculum and Policies (henceforth 'Council') a standing committee of the Faculty Senate, will be responsible for:

1. Maintaining the criteria for determining whether a course is appropriate to satisfy a curricular area in the UALR Standard Core;
2. Maintaining a submission and approval process for UALR Standard Core course inclusion;
3. Developing and maintaining a re-approval process, including a timeline, for UALR Standard Core course continuation;
4. Maintaining a plan to assess educational outcomes of the UALR Standard Core;
5. Overseeing college/program course inclusion beyond the UALR Standard Core to ensure the coursework meets the State Minimum Core;
6. Providing a detailed, written review to submitters for all decisions;
7. Granting exemptions to the UALR Standard Core requirements to programs, where appropriate, as outlined in part C.
8. Developing application and exemption forms reflecting these guidelines.

## Appendix C

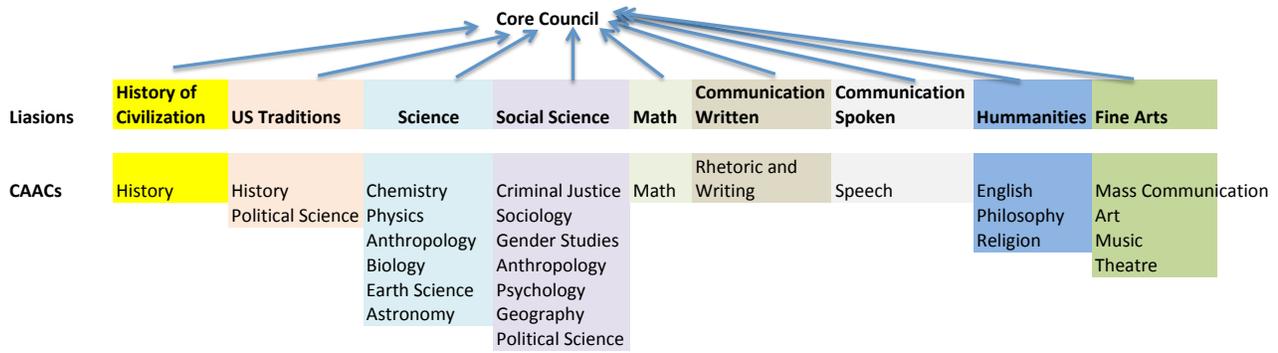
### *Progress on Core Assessment for Academic Year 2014-2015 and Fall 2015*

Fall 2014. The general plan of using common rubrics within curricular areas was adopted. Each curricular area has common educational goals and learning outcomes for those goals and rubrics will be based on the learning outcomes. The learning objectives for a particular course within a curricular area vary.

Spring 2015. Each curricular area formed a committee with a representative from each department with a core course in that curricular area. The CAACs (Core Curricular Assessment Committees) included a member of the Core Council to serve as a liaison. The first task was to complete a syllabus analysis of all core courses to determine how whether course syllabi covered the relevant learning goals and objectives. In addition, the CAACs were to develop a plan for collecting student artifacts across a variety of assignments and to design a common rubric based on the common learning outcomes to assess them.

This process produced the first assessment outcomes. Every group discovered that most syllabi did not include the relevant learning outcomes and objectives. The Core Council requested that in the future all core courses include the learning outcomes and objectives.

Fall 2015. The CAACs were asked to develop a plan for how to collect data and to collect pilot data. Each area was asked to submit a report due February 19, 2016 reporting both on the process of data collection and on how well their rubric worked.



Appendix E  
*Outline of Core Assessment Plan for 2015-2016*

1. Learning Objectives

All core courses will include the learning objectives submitted to the Core Council in their syllabi. Syllabi will also include the goals and outcomes or a link to them.

2. Pilot

Last spring (2015) all areas submitted a rubric or began working on a rubric. The completed rubric is necessary for this assessment process. The rubric assessed the knowledge goal 1 or 2 and a skills goal in the case of Speech and Rhetoric and Writing.

Each curricular area will devise a randomized way to select a section of each course in the core. Their method of selection will be covered in the required report.

The instructors in the selected sections will provide 3 student artifacts, one high (A work), medium (C Work), and low (F work) from an assignment that matches the goal and outcomes assessed by the rubric. We anticipate that this will occur toward the end of the semester.

The instructor from the section sends to the assessors (members of the CAAC) the work of all students in that section on that assignment divided into 3 categories: high (A work), medium (C work), and low (F work).

Assessors randomly pick one from each category and score. With the exception of Math, Speech, and Rhetoric and Writing assessors will not score the artifacts from their own discipline. In all cases, assessors will not score artifacts from their own courses. This means that the discipline representative will need to provide a detailed scoring key for the content of the assignment.

At this point we are testing the rubric and the process of assessment, not how well the students did.

For reliability two people will score each artifact. Percent agreement will be calculated. The report will cover reliability and how disagreements were resolved.

This is an iterative process.

If the rubric is changed then the assessors can go back to the student work that was not scored and test the new rubric.

Continuous improvement means it never ends. The second round of assessment begins in the spring with the immediate goal of testing any changes and the long-term goal of assessment to look at student learning beginning in Fall 2016.

c. Timeline.

Fall 2015: Each curricular area: Plan how to collect data, including a way to randomly section which sections of courses to include if there are multiple sections devising and fine-tuning the rubric, collecting artifacts, and scoring data. Scoring the data may take place in early spring if artifacts are collected at the end of the fall semester.

Report due: February 19, 2016

Then revise the rubric in the spring semester.

4. Concurrent sections of core courses

The Core Council has requested copies of syllabi from concurrent courses from the Provost's office. Copies will be provided to the relevant departments.

Guidelines for Spring 2016 CAAC Reports

Due: February 19, 2016

Submit report to the Core Council Liaison

Include in the reports:

1. Data in the spreadsheet provided by the Core Council.  
Please include any suggestions for improvements.
2. Describe the process followed to randomly select sections. Include suggestions for improvements.
3. How do you know the rubric worked? Provide examples.
4. Describe problems and solutions for the problems with the rubric scoring process and interpretations of the data.
5. Provide time estimate of how long it takes to score the work of one student for one learning outcome.

6. Explain how the student work that was collected covers the learning objectives, and associated learning outcomes. Please include any recommendations for future changes.