

Spring 2018

Core Curriculum Assessment Report

of

Skills 2 – Critical Thinking

from the

Social Science

Core Curricular Area



submitted by

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on behalf of the

Social Science
Core Area Assessment Committee

Methods

How was student work (artifacts) collected for assessment?

In compliance with the directives by Core Council, all modes of course instruction were assessed. If multiple sections of the course were being taught then one selection from each mode of instruction had to be selected. Professors of respective classes to be assessed selected artifacts they felt would provide good measurements of skills goals as found in the rubric. Depending on the format of the class, written artifacts or electronic documents were used for assessment. We used the rubric developed for Skills 2 - Critical Thinking, & Skills 3 - Information Technology as an efficient means of assessing and scoring student outcomes. Before any course packets were collected, we made sure that all core course instructors understood that we would be assessing student learning outcomes and scoring responses using our rubric for Skills 2&3.

What type of artifacts were collected?

Most courses utilized multiple choice questions while others selected exam essays or writing assignments as student artifacts. The different selections reflect the different types of classes being assessed for social sciences courses. We requested that student artifact submissions, whether they be essay, multiple-choice, or some combination of both, be submitted with a key for interpreting the data to ensure accuracy in scoring the artifacts.

How were the artifacts sampled for assessment?

Before we began the collection of student artifacts, we made sure that core area courses to be assessed were randomly selected to best ensure that all core course selections be unbiased. The number of artifacts per class will be no less than fifteen. For classes over fifteen, the instructor will use a random number generator (random.org) to identify the students whose artifacts will be submitted, based on their respective place on the class roster.

How were the artifacts scored?

Artifacts were individually scored using the scoring rubric we created for Skill 2 & 3. After all of the individual scoring rubrics were collected, each assessor would compile the results to create

a summary rubric for the entire course. The summary scoring rubric was submitted as the final score for the course(s) being assessed for Skills 2 & 3.

How was reliability in scoring determined and ensured?

Each core area course was assessed by at least two separate assessors. If the scores on the learning outcomes by two individual assessors reflected a high level of agreement, the scores were averaged and then recorded as final assessment scores. If an obvious and significant disagreement was found between the two assessors on the committee would reassign the assessing to try and determine the source of such a discrepancy. Fortunately, our assessing of the student artifacts didn't produce such discrepancies. Using a double-blind assessment strategy helped to ensure inter-rater reliability. A sampling of scores from pairs on different courses suggests that, on average, inter-rater reliability ratings were > 60%.

Reflection

What was learned from the assessment results?

We found that the techniques of collecting student artifact data employed by individual instructors became tedious for those with little understanding of specific courses. Similar to previous assessments, Economics and Geography seemed to be somewhat marginalized, both in terms of student artifact submissions and the interpretation of student artifacts to be scored. However, this problem is being addressed ad we are looking forward to a new strategy forthcoming.

Continuous Improvement

What changes will be made based upon the assessment results?

We believe we have a process that works, but we need to train departments in our method and process so that individual instructors will know what is expected of them when they have to submit assessment materials. We also need to address the issue of deadlines for collecting and submitting student artifacts to the committee. Finally, we must review the issue of non-compliance and find better ways to increase full participation by all programs and departments.

Feedback

What changes are recommended for Core assessment?

There are a few significant changes that we intend to employ in future assessments that should increase the proficiency of the assessment process:

- I think it all begins with a complete and comprehensive training venue for individual instructors of Core Courses participating in assessment which should help to ensure continuity and reliability of the assessment process.
- CAAC members need to continue to develop best practices for administering assessment instruments.
- We intend to develop an assessment “assignment” for each assessment educational goal and learning outcome(s) being measured. Individual assignments will be designed by instructors in each department/program that will be approved of by the CAAC membership, and distributed each time that a specific educational goal is scheduled for assessment.
- Although we have created working rubrics for educational goal that we assess, we intend to improve upon those to better conduct our assessment.
- Under the current schedule of assessing a different educational goal every semester, we have decided to have all artifacts in every core course being assessed, submit them by the first week of November in the fall term, and the first week of April in the spring term. Our goal is to have all student artifacts scored before the respective semester ends.
- Submission deadlines are firm; any core course that misses the submission deadline will not be assessed.

In addition to the changes noted above, we would like to propose to the Core Council: A department that does not teach one core course every semester should reconsider being in the core. Skipping semesters makes it difficult to track progress etc. It also interferes with mastery of the assessment process.

Comments

Other comments?

There were a number of failures that plagued our assessment in the fall of 2017. Some or most of these were attributable to failures in communication or simply failures to comply. For example, sociology didn't submit any assessment materials on face-to-face classes; gender studies submitted materials, but no student artifacts; anthropology didn't distinguish between learning outcomes 1 and 2 for Skills 2; political science submitted nothing; geography submitted materials but it was deemed too difficult to assess. CAAC has tried to simplify and streamline the process but our efforts have come up short and we need to revisit our process once again. Two things that we thought would be very helpful were the use of a cover sheet detailing what was included in the packet submitted for assessment, and the due dates we imposed to help expedite the assessment process. We continue to meet and will work to make the process more simplified and user friendly for all stakeholders in core assessment.

END OF REPORT