

Fall 2018
Core Curriculum Assessment Report

of

Values

from the

Humanities

Core Curricular Area



submitted by

Keith Robinson

on behalf of the

Humanities

Core Area Assessment Committee

Methods

How was student work (artifacts) collected for assessment?

The CAAC members worked with instructors of the various sections to collect artifacts. We provided all selected instructors information about Values 1-3 so that they may choose a fitting assignment to submit. In English, artifacts were collected from a representative from each course and modality. The same was done for Philosophy courses. Once collected, the artifacts were digitally uploaded to Google Drive and shared with the full committee. Individual folders for each discipline were created within the shared Humanities Core folder 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?

Nearly all artifacts across all courses and modalities were short papers, with the exception of one course that provided journals written over the course of the semester. All were responding to a particular prompt provided by the instructor.

Instructors of the selected sections decided which assignment to submit artifacts for, although instructors were strongly encouraged to make this the final assignment for the semester. CAAC members provided guidance and explanation for the Values area via departmental meetings and email instructions. Additional guidance from committee members was made available by request.

How were the artifacts sampled for assessment?

From each class and modality, artifacts were randomly selected for scoring. Since English had more modalities than Philosophy, in order for an equal amount of artifacts to be scored from each scoring pair, a section of World Literature (face-to-face) was placed with the philosophy sections for scoring giving each scoring pair 5 sections. For each course and modality, twelve artifacts were selected for review. Artifacts were selected using a random number generator to select specific artifacts from each course.

How were the artifacts scored?

We used the 4-point scale rubrics for Values 1-3 provided by Core Council. We divided the CAAC members into 2 groups, paired by department. The representatives from the English department scored the Philosophy artifacts (with the additional section noted above) and the representatives from the Philosophy department scored the English artifacts. Individual members entered scores for their assigned artifacts and entered them into a shared spreadsheet. The report writer compiled the final tally of results in the Google spreadsheet provided by Core Council.

How was reliability in scoring determined and ensured?

Prior to individual scoring, the CAAC committee met to discuss how best to interpret the grading rubric in the hopes of as consistent an evaluation as possible. As with previous meetings, most of our discussion centered around what differentiates the 1 “Not Met” from 0 “Absent” categories. After all artifacts were scored, the CAAC committee met to discuss the scores, with particular attention to any variation. Fortunately, only a handful (5 of the 720 total scores) of scores had a two point difference and they related to two essays and whether the essays were ‘advanced’ in all 3 values or showed ‘novice’ skills. The scorers met and discussed their different scores and this point was also discussed with the CAAC committee as whole.

Reflection

In what areas are students doing well?

Students are doing well at Global and Cultural Understanding where they are assessed on “identifying diverse world views in multiple cultural contexts” (Value 3). The vast majority (75-80%) of artifacts scored between 2-4 on this value with a large number of artifacts scoring ‘3’ – “attempted and was usually successful at”. As one might expect in assessing values there were differences in scoring across different courses with higher scores found in ethics classes which explicitly and specifically address the concept of value/ethical value. In addition, the general distribution of scores for a given course were largely the same across multiple modalities. This is encouraging since it indicates instruction is reaching students in a similar way, despite different class formats.

What areas need attention to improve student outcomes?

Scores on Value 2 (Civic Responsibility) were weak overall. With one exception all artifacts in ethics courses scored 2 or 3 on this Value. Of the remainder, with the exception of one set of scores in one section, all the remaining sections scored between 0-2 of which more than 50% scored at 0 with Mythology sections, in particular, scoring 0 on Value 2 at nearly 100%. If we wish to retain this value in Core we may need to ask for specific assignments/ artifacts/activities that more appropriately assess this value but, as has been mentioned in previous reports, it is likely more can be learned from these types of analyses the more similar in format the artifacts actually are.

Scores on Value 1 (Ethical and Personal Responsibility) were mixed and more difficult to interpret. Most artifacts were assessed at 2 or 3 with Mythology sections as outliers. We were of course hopeful that more students would have reached the 4 “Advanced” level, but only a few artifacts were scored at this level. While there are always opportunities to improve courses, part of the explanation of the relatively low amount of “Advanced” level evaluation, and the high number of ‘0’s or ‘not met’, is that all of the artifacts were assessed on all 3 values, where each Value appears to assess a different aspect of value.

Continuous Improvement

What changes in the curricular area and/or courses will be made to improve student learning?

The committee's discussion on this was tied to the assessment process. See below.

What changes in the curricular area and/or courses will be made in the assessment process (i.e. different artifacts, common assignments, different time in the semester to collect artifacts, etc.)?

The committee agreed that improvements to student learning might come from thinking carefully about the need to assess all 3 values together and, indeed, whether all 3 should be assessed separately in Core. In particular Value 2 – Civic Responsibility – does seem to require a separate artifact to be meaningfully assessed. On its own Value 3 is a recognition task and, in some cases, was achieved at '3' (proficient) merely by completing the assignment (by default or built into the set-up of the assignment). Values 1 & 3 overlap and could be combined. This would encourage the improvement of student learning because it would articulate together the identifying and recognition tasks of Value 3 with the evaluative and applicative tasks of Value 1.

We hope to continue to improve on communication and support for instructors. It was encouraging to have been able to collect from all intended courses and modalities, an important improvement from our previous report. Additionally, reliability of the data can be improved by better communicating to instructors that submitted artifacts should come from the later part of the term, when possible.

Feedback

What changes are recommended for Core assessment?

The Committee recommends an overhaul of the Values component of Core assessment. The original intent of the Values component was clearly to divide the sphere of values into personal responsibility, moving up to a more local or regional civic participation and then onto the recognition of a broader set of values in a cultural or global context. But these 3 separate areas cannot be meaningfully assessed with one artifact. Instructors may have been hard pressed to find a single artifact for all three values, and opted instead to submit artifacts they thought at least addressed two of the three values. Moreover, the question of whether we ought to assess these 3 areas in the Core is a valid one. Values 1 & 3 could be combined along the lines suggested above and, if we wish to continue to assess Value 2 it should be via a more apposite artifact or activity. The Committee were uncertain about whether Value 2 ought to be a Core requirement (rather than decided at the individual program level) but the evaluative and analytical tasks of a combined Value component (combining 1&3) ought to be a requirement for all UALR graduates.

Comments

Other comments?

We continue to appreciate the clarity and consistency in the report requirements, as well as the ease of communication with Core Council and Liasons.

END OF REPORT