

Selecting the outcome and approach

In February 2015, SACSCOC concluded its on-site reaffirmation visit to UIW, which included a review of the assessment of UIW's 10 Core Learning Outcomes. The reaffirmation committee recommended that UIW make direct measures of student learning for the Aesthetic Engagement (AE) outcome.

The use of rubrics to score student work has proven very effective in recent UIW core assessments of both student writing and Global & Historical Consciousness (G&HC). In particular, for the latter assessment, the Core Advisory Council (CAC) successfully applied an approach suggested by Dr. Catherine Wehlburg (Dec, 2013, SACSCOC Annual Meeting, Atlanta). Wehlburg demonstrated how to use a rubric designed for a core learning outcome, and use it to measure that outcome on student assignments that were not specifically tailored for the assessment. With that approach in mind, CAC approached the assessment of AE by preparing a rubric matching this learning outcome and applying it to student work in multiple disciplines and course levels.

The rubric design – what did we measure?

One difference from the G&HC assessment project: for AE, there is no proven VALUE rubric available. Therefore, sample AE rubrics were gathered from peer institutions and were used to draft a model rubric that assesses elements of UIW's AE outcome.

The plan was then to repeat the G&HC approach: simply gather existing assignments and exams from courses where AE is a natural outcome, and then see what level of student learning was achieved.

A working group was formed with the CAC chair and senior faculty from Philosophy, Music, and Communication. The group met twice and coordinated by email to build a general-use rubric that specifies the learning outcomes for UIW's expression of AE, based on the 1999 VOICE document (A Vision of Integrated College Experience).

The group agreed on a sentence updated from the VOICE document that they propose as the published learning outcome for Aesthetic Engagement:

Students will be able to perceive, analyze, evaluate, and respond creatively to aesthetic qualities and values in whatever contexts they are experienced in life.

The working group then built a general-use rubric, adaptable for any discipline, with four levels of achievement on three learning outcomes (rubric attached):

- Describe aesthetic properties appropriate to a given field
- Analyze aesthetic context of others' works
- Create works according to aesthetic guidance

Courses and assignments collected

The AE working group invited faculty from several courses and disciplines to examine existing assignments from the 2014-15 academic year and apply the rubric to assess student learning of the AE outcome. The assessed sections are tabulated here.

<u>Course</u>	<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Number enrolled</u>
ARTH/PHIL 3375 Aesthetics: Phil of Art/Beauty	Doug Gilmour	29 27
ARTS 1302 Drawing II	Miguel Cortinas	12
ARTS 3321 Painting II	Miguel	9
ARTS 4327 Adv Project Painting	Miguel	10
MUSI 1320 Music Appreciation	Kevin Salfen	24
MUSI 3342 Music History II	Kevin	29

EAP (distance and adult education) COURSES:

MUSI 1320 Music Appreciation	Precious Coleman	23 (online, Spring I) 23 (online, Spring II)
MUSI 3348 Studies in World Music	Precious	17 (ADCaP, Spring I)

The collection of courses spanned three different majors (Art, Philosophy, Music) and allowed comparisons of main campus and EAP, as well as upper and lower-division.

	Upper Div	Lower Div	Totals
Main Campus	104	36	140
EAP	17	46	63

Findings

The Rubric

The participating faculty from multiple disciplines found the rubric itself simple to use, easy to learn, and easy to adapt to their individual courses. Moreover, as in last year's assessment of G&HC, the rubric worked well in spite of the fact the assignments we assessed were not specifically designed for the rubric.

It was quickly obvious that not all courses provide opportunities to observe all three learning outcomes (Perceive, Analyze, Create); as in the prior assessment of G&HC, that fact did not hinder a meaningful assessment of AE.

The instructions given to participating faculty, and the final rubric used, are attached separately.

Valid & Reliable Results

From their perspective, the participating faculty reported that strong positive student scores (2 and 3, on a scale from 0 to 3) correlated well with students who did, in fact, demonstrate successful learning in their courses.

In the statistical analysis of the aggregate scores, the discrimination index was calculated for the outcomes of Perceive (0.19) and Analyze (0.3). (There were not enough samples to calculate a discrimination index for Create). The positive discrimination indices indicate an above average tendency for those rubric measures to distinguish between stronger and weaker student learning.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient, calculated for the entire data set, was 0.89. Since that figure is positive and close to 1, we conclude a very good reliability for the rubric as a whole.

Student Learning Results

For the entire sample of 203 students, the average scores (on a scale from 0 to 3) were:

2.51 for Perceive

2.24 for Analyze

2.32 for Create (smaller sample of 31)

Overall, those are very good levels of learning for AE outcomes, since 3 is the highest score, and 2 represents good "Progress" on the rubric.

Comparing upper (n=121) and lower-division (n=82) outcomes:

For Perceive, 2.24 in lower-division courses, compared to 2.69 in upper-division.

For Analyze/Eval, 2.22 in lower-division courses, and 2.25 in upper-division.

For Create (smaller samples), 2.33 in lower-division courses, and 2.32 in upper-division.

With the large sample sizes, the statistics show significant improvement ($p=0.01$) in the Perceive outcome, comparing lower-division to upper-division student learning. In the aggregate scores, there is not a significant difference in the upper and lower-division scores for the Analyze outcome and the Create outcome.

An interesting dimension in the scores is the comparison of main campus and EAP scores for Perceive and for Analyze. The overall sample averages for those scores was 2.24 for Perceive, in lower-division courses, and 2.22 for Analyze, in lower-division courses. If we examine just the main campus scores, the lower-division scores are significantly lower: 1.89 for Perceive, and 1.89 for Analyze. That means the upper-division scores represent a highly significant improvement ($p=0.01$) in student learning for main campus students in the sample.

The difference in main campus and EAP scoring could result from several simple factors and will be worth exploring in the next AE assessment project. First, the total sample of EAP students was much smaller than that of main campus. Second, only one EAP faculty member was available to participate, and for all scores in the total sample, only one faculty member determined each student's scores. We did find, in our prior G&HC assessment, that organizing scoring sessions with *pairs* of faculty did result in good inter-rater reliability for the rubric. Therefore, the next AE assessment should include that faculty pairing in its design.

The lower-division courses assessed in this project are courses typically taken by majors other than Fine Arts. So the learning in these courses is a good place to use the baseline data and determine a target for student learning. The main campus student data, with averages of 1.89 in both Perceive and Analyze, show that 86% of sampled students achieved a minimal learning level of at least 1 in the Perceive outcome, and 97% reached that minimum in Analyze. For the EAP student data, 85% of sampled students achieved that same minimum in each of those two outcomes.

Thus, a reasonable target for student AE learning in a single core Fine Arts course would be:

85% of all students in a given section of core (lower-division) Fine Arts will reach a learning level of 1, 2 or 3 (on the UIW AE Rubric) for the each of the three rubric outcomes: Perceive, Analyze, Create.

The upper-division courses should have a higher standard, of course. In the samples we gathered, the number of students who demonstrated higher-level learning, evidenced by scores of a 2 or 3, were significant:

97% of students, for Perceive
90% for Analyze
89% for Create

Therefore, a reasonable target for student AE learning in upper-division courses would be:

90% of all students in a given upper-division course where AE outcomes are taught, should reach learning levels of 2 or 3 (on the UIW AE Rubric) for each of the three rubric outcomes: Perceive, Analyze, Create.

Recommendations, Next Steps

Most importantly, this assessment project confirmed that the rubric used in the study is valuable and valid to assess student learning in AE, in any discipline. We recommend its use for annual program assessment and for campus-wide core assessments.

The large sample size in the project allowed us to determine some reasonable thresholds to expect for student learning, both in lower and upper-division courses that teach AE outcomes.

To improve the assessments, we recommend bringing together pairs of faculty to score each student work.