Divisional IV Outcomes Assessment Final Report

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Outcome assessment has become a prominent focus in academia as a means of demonstrating efficacy of teaching and learning (Dinur & Sherman, 2009). This professional means of accountability is noteworthy yet caution is warranted as institutions try to quantify the personal teaching and learning process into meaningful measurable data. Outcomes assessment has merit if not viewed with a holistic perspective but as one means of trying to capture a much broader experience. Therefore, choosing appropriate assessment tools becomes foremost for educators in an attempt to minimize an already potential skewed perspective.

Rubrics

Rubrics are instruments widely used across disciplines in the post-secondary education Students perceive these instruments as positive means of enhancing the learning process by reducing uncertainty, focusing efforts, improving the quality of work, and identifying areas of weakness for future improvements (Ready & Andrade, 2010).

In opposition to the overwhelming positive perception on the use of rubrics by students, university instructors still have mixed reviews and many remain resistance. "Instructors' limited conception of the purpose of a rubric might contribute to their unwillingness to use them" (Ready & Andrade, 2010, p. 439). Instructors perceived rubrics exclusively as grading instruments and not as tools that enhance the learning and teaching process (Ready & Andrade, 2010). Ready & Andrade (2010) suggest that receptivity to using rubrics by university instructors may be increased if evidence that these instruments also enhance teaching and learning is disseminated.

Objective

Towards this end, the Divisional IV Outcomes Team objective was to improve student learning assessment and enhance teaching and learning by reviewing the effectiveness of the Written Communication VALUE Rubric within the context of the individual health science program's needs. According to Finley (2012, p.33), "instruments should, therefore, both accurately capture the intended outcome (validity) and be able to do so consistently (reliability). Additionally, the team's aim was also to determine the utility of the Written Communication VALUE Rubric Division IV healthcare programs as well as the college academic community.

Planning/ Team Work

Roles and responsibilities were equitable and met without conflict as the members were committed to the goal, effective communicators, respectful, and open to the discovery process. The team worked together in the planning stages and later for analysis of the data. Adherence to timeline and designated tasks promoted positive team dynamics and is recommended as essential to future teams. This proved challenging at times since members of the team had many additional responsibilities as Program Directors. Additionally, one member of the original team stepped down. Another volunteer quickly stepped in and consequently the original plan and timeline was maintained for the most part.

Methodology

Research papers to be evaluated using the LEAP Value Written Communication VALUE (Association of American Colleges and Universities) and Connect (a Southeastern Massachusetts Public Higher Education Partnership) rubrics were identified. The papers were produced by students enrolled and Connect rubrics were identified. The papers were produced by students enrolled in MED 101, Introduction to Clinical Laboratory Science. This is a first-year, first-

semester course. In preparation for researching and writing the papers, students attended an information session with the reference librarian. Directions for the research paper, timelines and topic choices were provided for the students and evaluators. Seven papers, known as artifacts, were evaluated by three members of the faculty in Division IV. An artifact, as defined for the LEAP Rubric assessment project, is a finished work assigned in a specific class.

Artifacts were labeled 1-7 to maintain student confidentiality and to insure correlation of assessed artifacts. Prior grading was redacted to prevent bias. Copies of each paper were provided for the evaluators along with copies of the LEAP Written Communication Value and Connects rubrics. Three faculty members from Division IV reviewed the artifacts independently and met to discuss findings.

The LEAP Written Communication Value rubric is divided into five competencies (Appendix 1):

- Content of and Purpose for Writing

- Content Development

- Genre and Disciplinary Conversation

- Sources and Evidence

- Control of Syntax and Mechanics

Each competency is assessed as Capstone, Milestones or Benchmark according to stated criteria.

The Connect Writing Outcomes rubric is divided into six competencies (Appendix 2):

- Writing

- Critical Reading

- Audience, Purpose, Voice

- Thesis Development

- Organization

- Research and Information Literacy

Each competency is assessed as Expert, Practitioner or Novice according to stated criteria.

Data

Collecting the students' evidence was met without challenge. A grading sheet was created by one team member to assist in the organization of the data. Data was summarized by one team member and presented in a table format. This format was furthered modified to include the designation of grade that was predetermined in the planning phase to assist in the analyzing seen in figure 1.

Figure 1 Data Results

	Connect Group: Writing Outcomes and			LEAP Written Communication Value Rubric		
	Judge 1	**Judge 2**	**Judge 3**	**Judge 1**	**Judge 2**	**Judge 3**
#1	Practitioner B	Novice C	Practitioner B	Milestone 3 B	Benchmark D	Milestone 3 B
#2	Practitioner B	Practitioner B	Practitioner B	Milestone 3 B	Milestone 2 C	Milestone 2 C
#3	Expert A	Practitioner B	Novice C	Capstone A	Milestone 2 C	Milestone 2 C
#4	Practitioner B	Practitioner B	Novice C	Milestone 3 B	Milestone 2 C	Milestone 2 C
#5	Expert A	Practitioner B	Practitioner B	Capstone A	Milestone 2 C	Milestone 3 B
#6	Novice C	Novice C	Novice C	Benchmark D	Benchmark D	Benchmark D
#7	Novice C	Practitioner B	Practitioner B	Benchmark D	Milestone 3 B	Milestone 2 C

Discussion

Feasibility

Feasibility is defined as by the team as realistic and achievable use of the rubric. Some discussion involved the significance of understanding the design of the rubric. One member struggled with adopting the instrument since the objective of the team was to grade the assigned

papers. This rubric was not developed with this intention. The design was more in keeping with a development rubric. A development rubric differs from an analytical rubric in that it does not offer an end product evaluation or grade. So in that way, the rubric was not congruent to the purpose at hand. How was a grade to be achieved when this was not its intention?

To fulfill its objective, the team adapted the rubric as best as possible and used it as a holistic rubric. The headings Capstone, Millstone 3, Milestone 2, and Benchmark served as the means of quantifying the overall score which was difficult given that this was not its intention. These headings were assigned a grade in the planning phase, A, B, C and D respectively.

Another consideration of feasibility and validity is the alignment of the objectives with the evaluation criteria. This assignment required students to define the topic and its significance, relate the topic to a book, discuss future implications and, depending on the topic, distinguish between cells, describe outcomes, treatment, or procedures. This did require some review and reflection of the rubric in this context before starting the scoring since the evaluation criteria used differing language. Although these were congruent, it was observed by one team member that the differing languages could be confusing to the students. Therefore, using the same language in the assignment description would be recommended.

Going forward, faculty education regarding the LEAP Values Rubric would be worthwhile. This education should extend to knowledge of types of rubrics including analytical, developmental and holistic and the best type to use given the purpose at hand.

Utility

Utility is defined by the team as the potential benefit to many courses and programs. The Written Communication VALUE Rubric was chosen by this team since this is an overarching competency that encompasses specific needs of health science programs competency. This

added assessment instrument could be useful to faculty in multiple courses if the specific

purpose did not involve measuring an end product.

  As a developmental tool, specific areas of weakness and strengths could be monitored

and have potential to expand across the time of a student's educational experience. One team

member perspective found the development tool to have merit in outcomes assessment but

observed it would require more effort. Benchmark values would need to be determined for each

criterion instead of an overall score thereby making data collection more complex.

Nevertheless, very specific data could be valuable to the overall evaluation of student learning

that could lend its self to improvement in areas of teaching as is this rubrics overall intention.

Accuracy

  Figure 2 displays analysis of the results in percentage of agreement between scorers.

This would be one form of reliability but limited since consistency could not be established in

such a small group (N=7). Average agreement was calculated in percentage with the LEAP

rubric scoring lower at 52% than the CONNECT rubric at 66%. This percentage of agreement

was in part due to preparation to increase the rubric's validity by adapting the rubric to the

purpose and assignment objectives. It is suggested that the recommendations noted under the

feasibility and utility sections in terms of clear purpose and alignment of evaluation criteria with

objectives assists in the accuracy or reliability be part of the education process of faculty going

forward.

Figure 2 Accuracy

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ave. Agreement
Leap	66	66	66	66	0	100	0	52
CONNECT	66	100	0	66	66	100	66	66
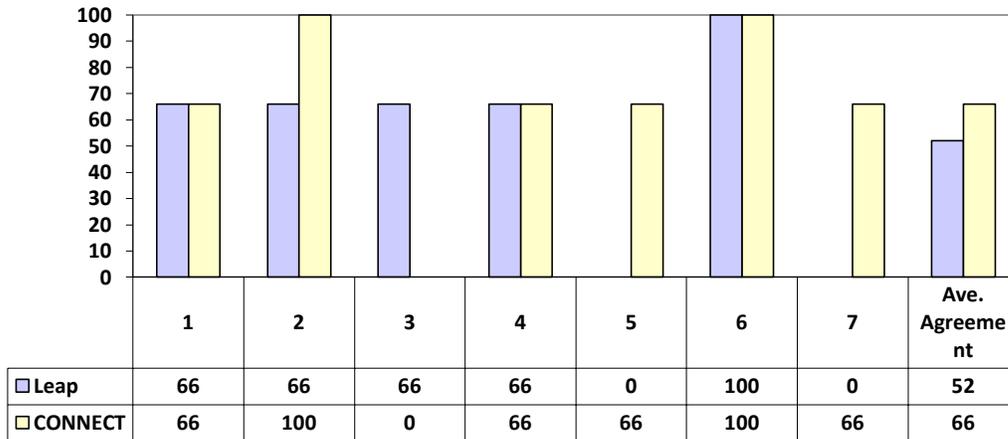
Lessons Learned

Overall the Written Communication VALUE Rubric demonstrated validity and reliability to the health science program MED 101 course and could be useful to other programs and courses if faculty education was included in its promotion. However, it is understood that the number of the group was too small to be statistically significant. Replication of this practice amongst other members of the college would be beneficial not only to increasing the data findings which would have more bearing on significance but through such practice it would increase awareness and knowledge in the area of outcomes assessment .

References

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Finley, A. P. (2012). How reliable are the VALUES rubric? *Peer Review/ ACC&U*, 31-33.

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Appendix 1

	Capstone 4	Milestones 3	2	Benchmark 1
Context of and Purpose for Writing *Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).*	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
Content Development	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
Genre and Disciplinary Conventions *Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary).*	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
Sources and Evidence	Demonstrates skillful use of high- quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
Control of Syntax and Mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

Appendix 2

	Writing: Students will move through the processes of writing: inventing, composing, and revising, culminating in editing according to the conventions of Standard Written English.	Critical reading: Students will critically read and respond to a variety of texts by summarizing, paraphrasing, analyzing, synthesizing, and critiquing.	Audience, purpose, voice: Students will compose a rhetorically effective text in a voice appropriate to the audience and the purpose of the writing.	Thesis development: Students will formulate an effective thesis and support it with evidence.	Organization: Students will compose coherent and cohesive essays and other texts.	Research and information literacy: Students will locate, evaluate, synthesize, and document primary and/or secondary source materials to support a position.
Expert	Writing is polished and insightful, demonstrating a synthesis of the writing process. Text contains few or if any errors in Standard Written English.	Writing engages fully with the text, demonstrating developed inferential and evaluative skills.	Writing demonstrates a clear sense of audience and effectively fulfills the writer's purpose. Voice is distinctive; vocabulary is aptly chosen, lively, and sophisticated.	Thesis is clear, thought-provoking, and well focused, supported by vivid and concrete evidence.	Writing demonstrates a logical and clear structure, incorporating graceful transitions and unified paragraphs.	Primary and/or secondary sources are skillfully interwoven into the text to support the thesis. Research is thorough, and sources are correctly cited.
Practitioner	Though competent, writing could improve from better application of one or two steps of the writing process. Text contains some errors in Standard Written English.	Writing shows adequate comprehension and some inferential ability; writing shows an ability to engage with the text.	Writing demonstrates a basic awareness of audience and generally fulfills writer's purpose; tone, diction, and vocabulary are functional and appropriate.	Thesis is clear and substantially supported by evidence in a straightforward though perhaps mechanical way.	Writing shows a basic sense of beginning, middle, and end; a functional introduction, body, and conclusion; and, for the most part, focused and orderly paragraphs.	Most sources are appropriate and correctly documented. Research is sufficient to the assignment and adequately integrated.

| Novice | Writing shows little change from invention to final draft, despite consistent problems with content and/or Standard Written English. | Writing demonstrates little comprehension of relevant texts, limited inferential skills, and a lack of awareness of authorial bias. | Writing demonstrates lack of awareness of audience and does not fulfill writer's purpose; voice is inappropriate as demonstrated by tone, diction, and vocabulary. | Writing exhibits no central thesis or exhibits a discontinuity between thesis and supporting evidence, or insufficient supporting evidence. | Introduction, body, and/or conclusion are unfocused or absent; ideas may be arranged illogically. | Writing demonstrates inappropriate use or lack of sources, faulty integration of researched materials, and/or incorrect or absent documentation. |