

Reading Outcomes Assessment Team Final Report

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Representing: Division I (Formerly Division VI)

Support: Debra Anderson, Assessment Fellow (through January 2104)
Holly Pappas, Assessment Fellow (January 2014 – present)

Updated Team Plan:

The Assessment Team for Division I (formerly Division VI) planned to focus its work on assessing students' progress in achieving course learning outcomes in a specified skills area of the course as evidenced in a variety of artifacts collected from two sections of RDG090 College Reading and Learning Strategies. The Team focused on one of the six Learning Outcomes already established for Reading 090. It evaluated achievement of the outcome according to the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubrics. The Team concluded its assessment with recommendations for future action to improve: composition of assessment assignments and RDG090 students' proficiency in meeting the assessed outcome. The Team also proposes considerations for extended assessment work.

Measurable Goals and Objectives

Course Goal and Objectives:

The Assessment Team selected the following RDG090 outcome as published in the RDG090 online toolkit and published in the college course catalogue.

RDG090 Outcome# 2: Students will analyze and synthesize for accurate comprehension.

This is the measurable outcome assessed by the team using the LEAP Critical Thinking Outcome.

The following is a list of objectives used to measure RDG090 Outcome #2:

- ✓ **Students will identify topic.**
- ✓ **Students will identify supporting details.**
- ✓ **Students will identify stated main idea.**
- ✓ **Students will construct unstated main idea.**

Team Goal and Objectives:

The Team's goal was to assess the level of proficiency at which the students' artifacts met this course outcome according to the applicable elements in the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubric.

This goal was met through the process of reading students' artifacts, assessing each one for holistic accuracy, norming and scoring the artifacts against the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubric. The team assessed criteria on the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubric that was best fit for the evaluation of the artifacts and the selected course outcome.

Objectives

The following is a list of points that were measured in assessing whether or not the course outcome was met in the students' artifacts.

- Students' statement of main idea as derived from given details in a given passage.
- Students' clear and accurate statement of the main idea

The Assessment Team's objective was to evaluate each artifact according to the objectives above and then assess if the student met the course outcome in a satisfactory manner. The team then rated each artifact through norming and scoring the artifacts on a scale corresponding to LEAP values.

Strategies and Timelines

June 2013:	Draft of Assessment Plan submitted
October 2013:	The request for faculty participation in the assessment.
November 2013:	The Assessment Fellow provided guidelines in the collection of student artifacts
December 2013:	Student work collected
January 2014:	The Assessment Fellow provided training on scoring and norming artifacts
January 2014:	Assessment of student work completed.
May 2014:	Results and recommendations for future action submitted in written report.

TEAM WORK:

How did your team develop and define the roles and responsibilities for team members?

In June of 2013, our Team was created. It was made up of members of Division VI. At that time, Division VI was composed of faculty and staff from various discipline areas: English, Reading, ESL and Math. Therefore, each discipline of Division VI was represented on our Team. We began by making a decision to choose the area of Reading assessment as our Project but the interdisciplinary nature of the Team remained in place. The roles of the two instructors of Reading became first to identify which Reading course to consider and then which outcome of that course to assess. The role of the other members was to support and advise these instructors.

The instructors chose Reading 090 and Outcome #2. The instructors presented this to the Team who approved. The Reading instructors then gathered student artifacts from Reading 090 sections. Each instructor gathered artifacts from one section, therefore, presenting the Team two sets of artifacts from two different instructors in the same course. Although the assignments assessed the same outcome, the actual assignments were both different. The assignments had different questions and were based on different readings of differing lengths and difficulty levels. One assignment had three short paragraphs followed by three questions and the other had a longer reading of multiple paragraphs followed by questions.

What were the strengths and challenges related to your team work?

One of the strengths of this Team was its interdisciplinary nature. The members of different disciplines could often give a view from the outside that provided all with a better understanding of the issues at hand. One of the challenges was getting a common time to meet. We often conducted discussions online and used email to write this Report. This allowed participation from the entire Team in a workable manner.

Who outside of your team members were involved in your work and how did you engage them?

The Team consulted with the Assessment Fellow, Deb Anderson via email and informal meetings. In addition, several members of the Team attended professional development sessions hosted by Deb Anderson, and the BCC instructional designer, Kevin Forgard.

What would you recommend to future teams about their team work?

Prior to norming, it would be beneficial for faculty providing the artifacts to apprise assessors of the assignment process, skills proficiency, and or proficiency expectations for the artifact. This would be most essential for more effective assessment of the artifacts especially if the assessors do not work in the content area of the artifacts. One way to communicate this could be through more explicit instructions on artifacts collected for assessment purposes. This detailed instruction could be incorporated into all course assignments, but in general may be redundant to the students. Another way would be to have Team discussions. We also would recommend to future teams to consider having one or more team members who are not instructors or staff in the discipline from which the artifacts are generated. This outside perspective can provide a different lens through which the assessment process can be viewed.

Did you get the training and support needed and what would you recommend going forward?

We feel our Team received good support in communication of timelines, reporting criteria, relevant information for moving through the assessment process, and valuable training on norming and scoring artifacts. Going forward, it would be helpful to have samples of assignments that provide enough skills/assignment process instructional statements so that the artifacts submitted for the assessors can be explicitly understood by an assessor from any content area.

STUDENT EVIDENCE:

What student evidence did you collect, where was it delivered from (courses, course levels) and how did you go about collecting it?

We collected two different assignments from two sections of Reading 090 that were taught by two different instructors in Fall 2014. The common learning outcome infused in each assignment that produced the artifacts was to assess the student's ability to identify and/or write a main idea of a reading passage. One assignment was a section from a Midterm Exam. It consisted of three separate paragraphs with three questions under each paragraph. Students responded to each question for each paragraph. The other assignment was a passage of multiple paragraphs. The assignment required students to analyze the reading through completing a template of main idea components and synthesizing the information to create a main idea statement for the passage.

What were the strengths and challenges to student evidence?

The strength of the artifacts was in the alignment of the student evidence to elements of the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubric. The alignment allowed student evidence to be assessed across several rubric criteria.

The challenge of the student evidence is twofold. First, the level of complexity of student responses varied and for assessors from other content areas, it was not always clear what was acceptable as a minimal yet accurate response. Another challenge of collecting student evidence was that, although the learning outcome was the same for both assignments, the actual assignments from each instructor were very different. One consisted of several separate short paragraphs followed by three questions after each paragraph. The other was one longer reading selection with several questions about that longer selection. The Team was hoping to assess one course outcome being-the ability to state the main idea of a reading selection. However, some of the questions from each assignment were often leading to an assessment of other course outcomes, such as identifying details and pattern of the reading. The Team discussed this issue during the norming and scoring process, and versus but it was difficult to focus on just one outcome when several were present in the assignments.

What recommendations do you offer about student evidence?

One recommendation is to provide a sample response that may have been helpful to the assessors along with more extensive explanations/instructions on the assignments.

Another recommendation is to collect assignments that are more aligned in format for assessing a particular outcome. For example, student assignments are an analysis of several short passages or all of one longer passage.

Another recommendation for the collection of future student evidence is to have assignments that are more similar in the question that is assessing the outcome. * It also might be possible to isolate the one or two questions and answers that are meant to assess the specific outcome and not “get lost” in having to look at looking at other questions and answers that might not be relevant to that specific outcome being assessed scoring.

USE OF THE LEAP RUBRIC:

Please describe the rubric you choose to use.

The Reading Assessment Team chose to use the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubric as this Rubric most closely reflected the outcomes of the course and the course work submitted for evaluation.

How was it helpful?

Using the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubric allowed us to reexamine the definition of critical thinking itself. It also lead us into a discussion of the levels of critical thinking that are evident in the Rubric and see that our course work in Reading 090 was the beginning of a process toward developing critical thinking at the college level.

How was it challenging?

Being constrained by a rubric, that is in effect generic to college critical thinking work, provided a challenge in the following areas. One challenge was in being able to interpret the meaning of some rubric criteria and its relevance to the course work and/or students’ artifacts. Another challenge was always keeping in mind that the outcomes of Reading 090 are not necessarily modeled after the LEAP Critical Thinking Rubric.

Please describe the scoring and norming process you used.

The Team assembled along with Deb Anderson. Deb acted as facilitator. We divided into several smaller two-member teams. We reviewed the LEAP Rubric and discussed the various elements of the rubric. Each group then reviewed a student sample from assignment one and determined where this artifact would be placed on the Rubric. The facilitator elicited explanations from each group for its decision. The entire Team had a general discussion about our collective findings. The process was repeated for assignment two. The team attempted to reach consensus for the scoring of each assignment's answers during this norming session.

Each group was then given artifacts from assignment one and assignment two to score. We then shared responses. The entire team discussed the issues surrounding any divergence of scoring decisions. We also discussed the construction of the assignments and the wording of the LEAP Rubrics.

What recommendations would you offer about use of the LEAP rubric?

It was most helpful for the Team to discuss the Rubric criteria and establish a consensus on the meaning and application of the criteria relative to the course outcomes and the course work. Discussion and negotiation of the rubric criteria relative to the course outcomes made the assessment work more clear and meaningful. We would therefore, recommend that Leap Rubrics be analyzed for criteria that most closely align with the course work being assessed. It is also recommended for assessors to negotiate and agree on the interpretation of Rubric language prior to norming and scoring.

LEARNING:

What did you learn about the following: Outcomes related to your rubric; Student evidence of the assignments that produced them; The process of outcomes assessment?

Overall the Team gleaned valuable information about 1- rubric outcomes, 2- student evidence and 3-the assessment process. While valuable insight to the critical thinking rubric was derived by using the LEAP Critical Thinking rubric tool, it became clear that a predesigned rubric cannot meet the needs of every critical thinking outcome or artifact. Another area in which the Team learned more about assessment of artifacts is the importance of clearly communicating assignment expectations, and instructions. It became evident in our assessment work that these areas are important for effective and efficient assessment work. The assessment process itself was enriched by having people on the Team from other content areas. They were able to provide objective views of the assignments and how to improve clarity of expectations for assessors outside the content area.

What action will you recommend be taken given the results you have found?

The Reading Assessment Team recommends the following for future assessment work:

1. It would be valuable for faculty to identify and use components of the established LEAP Rubrics in addition to designing in-house rubric criteria that is more closely aligned with the course and/or assignment outcomes. If it is not possible to incorporate course specific components to the rubric, then a discussion of best applicable rubric criteria could be had prior to norming and scoring to best ensure effective and equitable assessment of the artifacts.
2. To best communicate what course outcome the artifact is measuring, it would be helpful to provide faculty with examples of clear artifact instructions as it correlates to the measured outcome. This would help ensure that submitted artifacts clearly communicate the assignment's objective so an assessor from any content area can best understand the correlation between the assignment's goal and more accurate rubric scoring.

3. Another option is to provide faculty with professional development opportunities to improve assignment design for more clearly stated directions and desired outcomes for the assignment.

What would you recommend to the Outcomes Assessment Committee about future outcomes assessment efforts given your experience?

One recommendation is to continue to provide professional development opportunities (as noted above) for building an understanding and appreciation of assessment work, as well as, sessions on how to communicate assessment expectations clearly. If assessment work continues at the college, then open lines of communication, opportunity to engage in the assessment process and sharing of assessment findings should be streamed throughout the process and implemented in an ongoing manner to garner support from faculty across all disciplines and at all levels of curriculum.