**Program Name/s: Pilot AA/GER Humanities Assessment Faculty Working Group**

**Degree Type/s: AA**

**College/Campus: CAS/Anchorage**

**Academic Year: 2014-15**

**Submitted by: Bill Myers, CAS Assessment Coordinator, and AA Assessment Coordinator**

**Submitted to: Patty Linton, Senior Assoc. Dean, CAS, Dean Stalvey, CAS, Susan Kalina, Vice**

**Provost of Undergraduate Academic Affairs 15 June 2015**

**I) Humanities Assessment Pilot Description and Overview: The Faculty Inquiry Group.**

In an effort to get increased faculty involvement and discussion on AA/GER assessment, the AA Assessment Coordinator, Bill Myers, chaired an assessment inquiry group of four faculty volunteers who taught AA/GER Humanities courses. Two faculty were from Philosophy (Stephanie Bauer, Chair of Philosophy, and Hugh (Gunner) Deery, adjunct instructor), and two from History (Liz Dennison, professor, and Curtis Murphy, term instructor).

**II) The Process:**

The inquiry group met live and via email several times over the course of the Spring Semester to set up the general process and goals of the pilot assessment project. The group then met over three days in May 2015 (two days for discussion and reflection, one day for individual rubric scoring of student papers).

1. **Selected Student Essays**: The assessment process consisted of gathering selected samples of student artifacts (in this case, student essays), from Humanities AA/GER courses that the faculty taught. This included papers from PHIL 101 Intro to Logic, PHIL 201 Intro to Philosophy, HIST 101 Western Civilization I, and HIST 102 Western Civilization II. Faculty also collated total student scores on the chosen paper assignments (for each class, how many total A’s, B’s, C’s, etc., on the selected paper). Participating faculty exchanged syllabi, essay assignments, paper guidelines and grading rubrics that they have designed for their own AA/GER courses. The group decided to select A, B, C, and D sample papers from their course to exchange for review. A total of 43 papers were chosen (out of 241 graded papers), from 8 AA/GER Humanities course sections. Western Civ. II aggregate scores and papers came from 2 online sections.
2. **AA/GER Outcomes Assessed:** The inquiry group spent much time discussing which AA and/or GER outcomes they taught and assessed in their Humanities courses. The group chose to assess 3 simplified outcomes for this project: **Effective Communication, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy**.
3. **Rubric Design and Scoring:** After examining several national examples, the inquiry group developed a simplified rubric for each of the outcomes, with criteria and levels of achievement to be used to score the selected student papers (see attached rubrics). The group went through a rubric scoring norming exercise, prior to embarking on a day and a half individual rubric scoring of the student papers.
4. **Individual review and group discussion/reflection:** The faculty inquiry group met for over 3 hours to exchange rubric scores, discuss findings on student performance, reflect on the outcomes and rubrics, and make recommendations.

**II) Findings:**

1. **Aggregate Student Scores for assignment:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **A** | **B** | **C** | **D** | **F** |
| **PHIL 101-Intro to Logic (36 total)** | 13 | 12 | 2 | 0 | 9 |
| **PHIL 201—Intro to Philosophy (91 total)** | 51 | 13 | 4 | 0 | 23 |
| **HIST 101—West. Civ. I (87 total)** | 9 | 34 | 19 | 5 | 3  (17 not turned in) |
| **HIST 102-West. Civ. II (48 total)** | 7 | 18 | 11 | 3 | 5  (4 not turned in) |

1. **Student Performance on Outcomes:** the faculty inquiry group found that the selected A papers were worthy of such a score; they found common strengths in all three outcomes of strong writing, analytical and information literacy skills. The group found greater range of disagreement in assessing B papers, and general agreement on C papers.

Overall assessment of student performance:

* **Competent in writing--**solid grammatical skills; as expected, style, organization and coherence varied and could use improvement, but this comes from continuous practice.
* **Satisfactory in critical thinking**--thesis formation and development and significance are areas that need improvement, but emergent skills are developed across the board in these survey/intro classes.
* **Solid in information literacy**--citation conventions and expectations, however, are dependent upon discipline and instructor.

**III) Reflections and Recommendations**

1. **AA/GER Outcomes Language:** The inquiry group found the language of the existing AA and GER outcomes, as applicable to the Humanities, bulky when creating an assessment rubric. As seen in the attached rubric, the team chose to simplify the outcomes assessed to effective communication, critical thinking and information literacy. More specific criteria to elaborate what skills were assessed in each outcome were developed for the individual rubrics, but even then, the group thought that simplified was better than too many and too much detailed criteria.
2. **Rubrics**: Not surprisingly when gathering academics together, the creation and use of assessment rubrics generated much discussion. Some challenges that arose included how to account for disciplinary differences in assessing outcomes criteria. For example, Philosophy sees “sustained argument” through a bit different lens than History when assessing critical thinking. Different faculty expectations also emerged over appropriate citation conventions, or relevant use of supporting evidence in a History paper analyzing medieval documents compared with a Philosophy paper applying Mill’s methods of agreement to an assigned reading. Nonetheless, the inquiry group strongly agreed that the rubric-making and assessing exercise itself was a worthwhile learning experience for the group. They also agreed that the rubrics could serve as a general guide for each department and faculty teaching Humanities AA/GER courses, and it could be modified as necessary to fit the needs of each discipline and faculty. This assessment pilot confirmed that students need to be made aware of the expectations, outcomes for the course and the individual assignments, whether communicated by paper grading rubric, or prose paper guidelines.
3. **Teaching and Learning:** The Humanities faculty working group found this assessment inquiry to be extremely beneficial for their own teaching practices. Comparing syllabi, assignments, paper guidelines, grading rubrics, and student papers generated vigorous and sustained discussion on the part of the group—what teaching techniques had worked, not worked, why and why not. In short, this was an excellent opportunity for pedagogical development. Students can only benefit as faculty bring back to the classroom refined focus on student learning outcomes, and enhanced techniques in building and improving on student academic skills. The cross-disciplinary exchange was also quite useful, noting the differences and the commonalities that bind the Humanities together. Bringing together adjunct, term, online and full-time tenured faculty helped to create a strong sense of a shared mission, of the continuing need to communicate and teach the value of the Humanities as part of any general education program.

**IV) Concluding Thoughts:** Many thanks to Susan Kalina, Vice Provost of OUAA and Dean John Stalvey and Senior Associate Dean Patty Linton, CAS for their support of this project. The group recommends further use of these faculty inquiry groups for assessing the AA and GER programs. Working on a staggered assessment of SLOs, utilizing a small working faculty group, sampling a targeted selection of student products will not only provide a more sustainable and useful model of AA/GER assessment, it will generate valid and vibrant pedagogical discussion amongst participating faculty, and make a positive impact on student performance.

**AA Program Student Learning Outcomes**

Students graduating with an AA degree from UAA will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively with diverse audiences (individual, group, or public) using a variety of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies;
2. Respond effectively to writing assignments using appropriate genres and standard written English;
3. Use library and electronic research responsibly and appropriately;
4. Identify, describe, and evaluate the aesthetic, historical and philosophical aspects of material culture, including artistic expressions, language, and texts;
5. Apply critical thinking skills to identify the premises and conclusions of arguments, evaluate their soundness, and recognize common fallacies;
6. Use appropriate mathematical language and symbols to develop and communicate solutions and demonstrate quantitative and analytical skills and knowledge;
7. Articulate the fundamentals, developments, and impacts of one or more scientific disciplines and develop and analyze evidence-based conclusions about the natural and social world.

**GER Student Learning Outcomes**

After completing the GERs, UAA students shall be able to:

1. Communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and formats;
2. Reason mathematically and analyze quantitative and qualitative data competently to reach sound conclusions;
3. Relate knowledge to the historical context in which it developed and the human problems it addresses;
4. Interpret different systems of aesthetic representation and understand their historical and cultural contexts;
5. Investigate the complexity of human institutions and behavior to better understand interpersonal, group and cultural dynamics;
6. Identify ways in which science has advanced the understanding of important natural processes;
7. Locate and use relevant information to make appropriate personal and professional decisions;
8. Adopt critical perspectives for understanding the forces of globalization and diversity; and
9. Integrate knowledge and employ skills gained to synthesize creative thinking, critical judgment and personal experience in a meaningful and coherent manner.

**Tier 1**: Basic College-Level Skills, 12 credits **Tier 2**: Disciplinary Areas, 22

**Tier 3:** Integrative Capstone, 3 Total Credits, 37

**Outcome: Effective Communication—Rubric used for Assessment**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Level—Unsatisfactory--0 | Level—Minimal--1 | Level—Satisfactory--2 | Level—Strong--3 |
| Responds effectively to assignment |  |  |  |  |
| Grammatical Coherence |  |  |  |  |
| Logic/Effective Organization |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Effective Comm. Sub-total\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  
**Outcome: Critical Thinking-- Rubric used for Assessment**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Level—Unsatisfactory--0 | Level—Minimal--1 | Level—Satisfactory--2 | Level—Strong--3 |
| Thesis/Identify Problem |  |  |  |  |
| Sustained argument |  |  |  |  |
| Significance |  |  |  |  |

**Critical Thinking Sub-total\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Outcome: Information Literacy-- Rubric used for Assessment**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Level—Unsatisfactory--0 | Level—Minimal--1 | Level—Satisfactory--2 | Level—Strong--3 |
| Demonstrates relevant use of supporting evidence |  |  |  |  |
| Follows appropriate citation conventions |  |  |  |  |

**Information Literacy sub-total\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Total Score=\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Outcome: Effective Communication—Revised post assessment**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Level—Unsatisfactory--0 | Level—Minimal--1 | Level—Satisfactory--2 | Level—Good--3 | Level—Excellent--4 |
| Responds effectively to assignment |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grammatical Coherence |  |  |  |  |  |
| Effective Organization |  |  |  |  |  |

**Effective Comm. Sub-total\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  
**Outcome: Critical Thinking-- Revised post assessment**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Level—Unsatisfactory--0 | Level—Minimal--1 | Level—Satisfactory--2 | Level—Good--3 | Level—Excellent--4 |
| Thesis/Identify Problem |  |  |  |  |  |
| Effective argument |  |  |  |  |  |
| Awareness of Significance |  |  |  |  |  |

**Critical Thinking Sub-total\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Outcome: Information Literacy-- Revised post assessment**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Level—Unsatisfactory--0 | Level—Minimal--1 | Level—Satisfactory--2 | Level—Good--3 | Level—Excellent--4 |
| Demonstrates relevant use of supporting evidence |  |  |  |  |  |
| Factual Comprehension |  |  |  |  |  |
| Follows appropriate citation conventions |  |  |  |  |  |

**Information Literacy sub-total\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Total Score=\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**