UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS™

Office of Assessment

UCA Core Proposal

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Values of the UCA Core

The goal of the program is to develop curious, knowledgeable, articulate, and responsible people who are prepared for life as engaged citizens in their communities.

The UCA Core is a cohesive course of study carried through the student's entire undergraduate career that builds core competencies around four knowledge and skill areas:

Critical Inquiry

The ability to analyze new problems and situations to formulate informed opinions and conclusions.

Effective Communication

The ability to develop and present ideas logically and effectively in order to enhance communication and collaboration with diverse individuals and groups

Responsible Living

The ability to address real-world problems and find ethical solutions for individuals and society

Diversity

The ability to analyze cultural assumptions in the context of the world's diverse values, traditions, and belief systems as well as to analyze the major ideas, techniques, and processes that inform creative works within different cultural and historical contexts.

Current Assessment Process

The UCA Core Assessment process is designed to measure student learning in and across the lower and upper divisions of the UCA Core. The process is an essential component in making evidence based decisions regarding curricular development and will inform recommendations regarding curricular and faculty development measures.

The current assessment process includes the following:

- A course is admitted into the UCA Core.

- As part of admittance, the course is aligned to one of the four competencies.

- The UCA Core is on a four-year cycle with one outcome being assessed annually.

- When a course is up for assessment, the faculty member must score all students on the designated assignment with the respective UCA Core rubric for a singular goal under the competency for which the course was approved.

- Data is pulled from Blackboard and provided to the Office of Assessment and the UCA Core Director for analysis and report generation.

- Results are shared with the UCA Core Council and the Assessment sub-committee.

Pros and Cons

Pros

- In the current process, **all** students are to be assessed within a given competency.

- Faculty, by default, are engaged in the scoring process.

- No workarounds are needed for non-paper artifacts.

Cons

- The data is not generalizable to the UCA Core overall due to lack of calibration.

- Not all faculty are submitting scores. The participation rate was 68%.

- Some faculty are blanket scoring all students in their section (giving all students the same score).

Overall, the largest issue that needs to be addressed is the inability to make generalized UCA Core Improvement Action decisions.

Office of Assessment Recommendations

The Office of Assessment has reviewed the current processes, existing data, and implementation factors, and would like to make the following recommendations to the UCA Core Council:

- Continue with current processes until the end of Spring 2017.
- Adjust scoring model from all students to a sampling of the larger population.
- Recruit teams of evaluators by competency and goal to score student artifacts.
  - Develop faculty compensation model for evaluation participation.
- Develop Improvement Action teams to interpret reports from the Office of Assessment and Director of the UCA Core to oversee Improvement Action implementation.
- Create a standard that a student artifact, or artifacts, must be generated to indicate student proficiency of the respective UCA Core Student Learning Outcome.
- Increase faculty professional development for UCA Core, to include assignment development, rubric application, and syllabus design.
- Communicate data back to the programs and departments post-evaluation to aid in programmatic improvement action decision-making processes.
- Connect UCA Core to the annual programmatic assessment requirements [formerly, CIP Plans].
- Develop annual programmatic assessment requirements [formerly, CIP plan] for the UCA Core as a singular, coherent program.

Process in Action

- UCA Core will continue to rotate through the four outcomes as currently scheduled.
- All faculty who are scheduled for UCA Core assessment in the coming academic year will be provided an online Cover Sheet via Qualtrics. (See, Appendix 1)
- The Director of UCA Core will work in collaboration with the Director of Assessment to collect all student artifacts, including the minimization of logistical concerns (e.g., oral presentation recording).
- The UCA Core Council will actively recruit a scoring team for each outcome from those instructors who teach UCA Core classes within that respective outcome.
- The Scoring Teams will be trained in the Spring semester annually.
- The Office of Assessment will create a systematic random sample of student artifacts to be scored each summer.
- In the early Fall semester, the scoring team will be brought back together to norm and score the artifacts contained within the sample via an electronic scoring system.
- The Office of Assessment in Collaboration with the Director of UCA Core will develop reports that communicate the results of the evaluation to **all** stakeholders, and will be posted electronically.
- The Improvement Action team will work in collaboration with the UCA Core Director and Center for Teaching Excellence to develop, implement, oversee, and document all Improvement Action implementation and effectiveness.
- The assessment results will be made available on the Office of Assessment website post-UCA Council review, and distributed to all colleges and departments.

Potential Benefits and Concerns

Potential Benefits

The recommendations made in this brief address several major university concerns while meeting the needs of the UCA Core Assessment standards:

1. Faculty are relieved of the scoring, and, therefore, have more time to dedicate to their instruction, improvement actions, closing the loop, and programmatic assessment efforts. This is better than time spent scoring, thereby potentially causing burnout.
2. Faculty are provided the results of the scoring as a feedback mechanism.
3. The feedback mechanism is generated by faculty peers trained in assessing their specific UCA Core Outcome.
4. The results are generalizable, as the sampling is occurring across the entire population, and the evaluators are normed, or calibrated, prior to scoring student artifacts.
5. Improved inter-rater reliability.

Potential Concerns

1. Loss of faculty "buy-in": Removing faculty from the process of scoring their own assessment materials for their courses will lead them to view assessment as distinct and unconnected to their courses.
2. Local relevance: The generalized UCA Core data may not be relevant at the departmental level and informative in improving student learning.
3. Disciplinary distinctions: UCA Core outcomes can't adequately be assessed across disciplines where these outcomes are measured with regard to specific disciplinary knowledge and practices.

The UCA Core Council will be diligent in administering and monitoring this assessment program to mitigate all of these concerns.

Appendix 1: Sample Cover Sheet

Q1.1 Primary Instructor Info

    First Name (1)

    Last Name (2)

    College (3)

    Department (4)

    Email (5)

    Phone (6)

Q1.2 Course

Q1.3 Section(s)

Q1.4 Please attach your course syllabus

Q2.1 Student assignments will be scored using the UCA Core area rubric by faculty evaluators in May 2017. Please provide enough information below that will allow the evaluators to conduct a fair assessment of your student's work. Multiple assignments can be used, if appropriate, to best demonstrate student achievement of the outcome

dimensions in the rubric. All outcome dimensions listed below must aligned to one or more assignments indicated below.

Q2.2 Assignment title #1

Q2.3 Approximate due date of assignment

○ Before mid-term (1)
○ Around mid-term (2)
○ After mid-term but before finals week (3)
○ Finals week (4)

Q2.4 In what format will the assignments be provided to the Office of Assessment?

○ Blackboard (1)
○ Paper-based (2)
○ Electronic (but not in Blackboard) (3)

Q2.5 Please either upload your assignment instructions OR provide a short description of the assignment in the box below.

Q2.6 Upload assignment instructions (#1)

Q2.7 Assignment Instructions (#1)

Q2.9 If your primary assignment listed above does not address all outcomes in the rubric, please include another assignment below that satisfies the remaining outcomes.

Q2.10 Assignment title #2 (if needed)

Q2.11 Approximate due date of assignment

○ Before mid-term (1)
○ Around mid-term (2)
○ After mid-term but before finals week (3)
○ Finals week (4)

Q2.12 In what format will the assignments be provided to the Office
of University Assessment?

○ Blackboard (1)
○ Paper-based (2)
○ Electronic (but not in Blackboard) (3)

Q2.13 Upload assignment instructions (#2)

Q2.14 Assignment Instructions (#2)

Q8.1 Feel free to include any comments below that will assist in understanding UCA
Core assessment for your course [not required]

Office of Assessment & UCA Core Council

Office of the Provost

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