

Culminating Experience:
Oral and Written Communication and Expression Assessment Report
April 2023

Introduction:

This document summarizes the activities and findings of the oral and written communication assessment conducted in AY 2022–23. The assessment of this learning outcome was prepared by the following Assessment Team members.

- Kurt Kirstein: CEPS Assessment Coordinator
- Kara Gabriel: COTS Assessment Coordinator
- Francesco Somaini: CAH Assessment Coordinator
- Yurim Lee: COB Assessment Coordinator
- Yoshiko Takahashi: Dean of Undergraduate Studies

At Central Washington University (CWU), all students complete a final General Education course, the Culminating Experience, in their junior or senior year. This course challenges students to draw connections between their own disciplinary studies and their General Education experiences and learning. As those students who took the Culminating Experience would be “at or near graduation,” assessment results for those students would reflect their learning experience at CWU.

Culminating Experience Outcomes:

The culminating experience includes the following outcomes.

For a specific issue, problem, research question, or act of creative expression, students will

1. Demonstrate clear communication strategies and techniques in oral, written, or expressive form.
2. Apply higher-order critical thinking and/or problem-solving skills.
3. Reflect upon, integrate, and apply the knowledge and skills they gleaned from their undergraduate experience, including General Education.
4. Synthesize and present a response, propose a solution/answer, or showcase their own creative work.

Culminating Experience (CE) Assessment Plan:

Each year, one of these outcomes can be assessed by taking the following steps.

1. Identify a set of culminating experience courses.
2. Ask instructors to provide artifacts (significant assignments) from these courses.

3. Gather a meaningful sample of artifacts (25–40).
4. Assess each artifact against a matching AACU value rubric.
5. Summarize our findings and share the results.

Student Artifact Collection Process:

The assessment in AY 2022–23 was focused on Outcome #1: Communication assessment. Based on the CE courses offered in Spring 22 (103) and Fall 22 (57), each College Assessment Coordinator had reached out to the faculty in their own college and asked to submit the student artifacts. The target number is shown in the below table. When collecting the artifacts, the instructor was asked to select the artifacts randomly, for example, providing the first and last/middle paper in their course.

	Spring 22 # of courses	Fall 22 # of courses	Total	Percent	Target # of artifacts
CAH	24	13	37	23%	10
COB	10	3	13	8%	8
CEPS	32	21	53	33%	12
COTS	37	20	57	36%	12
Total	103	57	160	100%	

By March 1, 2023, a total of 82 artifacts were collected. Before the Assessment Day, all the identifiable information, such as the name of the student, student ID, the name of the instructor, and the course number, was removed. However, the master file that includes such information was kept in the Office of Undergraduate Studies in case the assessment committee needs to review the original documents.

	Number of Artifacts	Percent
CAH	21	26.3%
COB	16	20.0%
CEPS	16	20.0%
COTS	27	33.7%
Total	80	100.0

Developing the Rubric:

The following rubric was used for the assessment. After assessing the AAC&U value rubrics for the student artifacts we collected, we combined the written and oral communication value rubrics from AAC&U. More specifically, the discipline-specific item was replaced with the Organization line from the Oral Comm rubric. Also, any references to “presentation” were removed from the rubric. The performance metric is an average of at least 3 in all five areas.



WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

For more information, please contact value@acu.org



Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
	4	3	2	1
Context of and Purpose for Writing <i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s)</i>	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.
Organization	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently present and is skillful.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is clearly and consistently present.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is intermittently present.	Organizational pattern (specific introduction and conclusion, sequenced material within the body, and transitions) is not present.
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.

Assessment Day:

For the March 3, 2023, Assessment Day the following associate deans and faculty participated in reviewing the student artifacts.

Those reviewers were as follows:

- Elizabeth Brown: Library, Faculty
- Kurt Kirstein: CEPS, Associate Dean
- Michael Harrod: COTS, Associate Dean
- Elvin Delgado: COTS, Associate Dean
- Elizabeth Fountain: CEPS, Faculty
- Yurim Lee: COB, Faculty
- Coco Wu: COB, Associate Dean

Kara Gabriel: COTS, Faculty
 Mark Meister: CAH, Associate Dean
 Francesco Somaini: CAH, Faculty
 Yoshiko Takahashi: Dean of Undergraduate Studies

The day before the Assessment Day, the reviewers received two artifacts and the rubric and were asked to score those before coming to the Assessment Day. The first 30 minutes of the Assessment Day were used for a norming session where the reviewers shared their scores to see if there were any discrepancies among the reviewers. The process helped to optimize the inter-rater reliability. The reviewers were divided into three groups, and each group was assigned 28–30 artifacts to review. Those artifacts included two podcasts and one handwritten essay. The reviewers submitted scoring sheets, and those scores were entered into a spreadsheet. The last 30 minutes of the Assessment Day was used for the debrief discussing what we learned and how we could improve the process.

Analysis:

The table below shows the results of the Assessment Day. The averages on all five rubric descriptors for all artifacts were calculated and then broken out by college. For “ALL,” every artifact was used, even those that only had one assessment. The college data were based on 42 individual artifacts that were reviewed by at least two reviewers. Any artifacts for which there was only one assessment were removed.

Assessment Results: CE Outcome 1—Oral and Written Communication and Expression

Performance Metric: An average of at least 3 in all five areas

	Purpose	Development	Organization	Evidence	Syntax	N
All	2.89	2.71	2.83	2.33	2.63	133
CAH	3.00	2.78	2.94	2.50	2.89	18
CEPS	2.87	2.62	2.87	2.50	2.49	55
COB	3.37	2.88	3.50	2.25	2.88	8
COTS	2.76	2.71	2.59	2.08	2.59	49

- For ALL—the scores are based on every assessed artifact.
- For the colleges, only artifacts assessed by two or more people were included.

What we learned:

Process

- It will be helpful to have a pre-Assessment Day meeting to clarify the purpose and do a bit of training.
- Consideration needs to be given to which artifacts are chosen; they should be valid measures of the CE outcome we are trying to measure.
- Short assignments and exams are not useful; they don't provide enough useful evidence of the outcome.
- The rubric that we use needs to be adjusted to ensure that we are assessing what we care about and what is in the assignment. Sources and evidence were problematic because we did not know if it was to be part of each artifact. We should consider combining Sources and Evidence with Content Development.
- The five-part rubric might be overly complex.
- When we get to the capstone, which is used for many CE courses, there is a lot of discipline-specific content. Those doing the assessment should be familiar with those disciplines.
- Add an N/A option, where useful, in the rubric.
- As we want all students to show competence in the same four outcomes, we should consider creating a common set of CE classes/artifacts that all students complete. That way, we would have standard measures across all programs.
- Many of the courses that we chose as CE classes were existing classes that underwent no changes before they were qualified as CE classes. Should they be updated to better serve as indicators of the four CE outcomes?

Assessment Scores

- For all four colleges, we missed the performance metric in all five areas. Is it the right performance metric or are there other issues involved?
- We need to evaluate our results and come up with a plan to communicate what we found. Who do we communicate to and how do we do that?

How to close the loop:

We will make a presentation at the ADCO in the Fall to share what we found, and this is what we will do next.

- 1. Develop a clearer process for the next round.**
 - a. Use of CANVAS will be a better way to review/score the artifacts. The committee will seek support from Multimodal.
 - b. Fix the problematic things learned from the first assessment before the next assessment.

- i. **Student artifacts inconsistent.** Some artifacts were only a few paragraphs, others were full literature reviews. Also, we had a handwritten paper and podcasts.
- ii. **Artifact mismatch with the rubric.** Some of the artifacts were not able to be properly assessed by the rubric as some assignments did not require citations and references.
- iii. **Issues on scoring scale and performance metrics.** We set a 3.0 average as the performance metric, but that needs some adjustment. The option would be to expand the highest scale from 4 to 5 or change the performance metric from 3 to 2.5. Scores were lower than expected because reviewers did not feel comfortable selecting “4” (highest score) when they were not experts in a particular discipline.

2. Conduct meta-analysis of CE courses’ learning outcomes

Some of the Culminating Experience courses existed before the new Gen Ed programs were developed and added to the Culminating Experience section. Therefore, it is possible that courses are not well-matched to the four learning outcomes. During the summer, the committee will look at the CE courses to see how well they match the four learning outcomes.

3. Combine the CE assessment with the Gen Ed Assessment

Not all programs have CE courses that are included in Gen Ed. As the new Gen Ed assessment policies were approved by the Senate, we might not need two separate sets of assessment every year. The Committee expressed that is a significant burden for collecting the student artifacts, and we might want to simplify the process.

4. Develop clear annual timelines for the Gen Ed Assessment

During the summer, the committee will develop a standardized timeline for the Gen Ed Assessment and inform the faculty. This year’s assessment did not start until the Winter quarter so everything was rushed, and we did not have enough time to scrutinize the process. It is important to set timelines for letting faculty know the assessment plans at the beginning of the year. A clear timeline, including when the CANVAS shell will be created, when the data collection will occur, and the date for the assessment day, would make the process move forward smoothly and remove some of the obstacles.

Appendix A: Assessment Day Agenda



LEARN. DO. LIVE.

Assessment of Culminating Experience Outcome: Communication

March 3, 2023

1 – 4:45 pm

Barge 304

Schedule

- 1:00 – 1:30pm** **Review rubric**
Discuss inter-rater reliability
Sample scoring session
Separate into 3 groups (Barge 203, Barge 304, Barge 410)
- 1:30 – 2:45pm** **Assessment of artifacts**
- 2:45 – 3:00pm** **Break (refreshments in Barge 304)**
- 3:00 – 4:15pm** **Assessment of artifacts**
- 4:15 – 4:45pm** **Reconvene to discuss assessment and collect all documents**

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