ArtCenter

WASC Core Competencies Analysis 2020

Background:

ArtCenter College of Design undertook an assessment of the five WASC (WASC Senior College and University Commission) Core Competencies on an annual basis beginning with the Calendar Year 2015 (spring, summer, and fall) through the 2019/2020 year (summer, fall, and spring assessment cycle) with a recalibration of practices and data collection occurring in 2016/2017. The WASC Core Competencies[1] are defined by the WASC 2013 Handbook of Accreditation as: Written Communication, Oral Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy. The institutional review process requires institutions to define and address these competencies through the demonstration of student performance, evidence of their students' achievements, and provide an explanation of how the institution approaches the outcomes of the assessment[2].

Method:

ArtCenter followed the recommendation from the WASC 2013 Handbook of Accreditation in assessing the Core Competencies at the program (major) level, "at a point close to graduation as determined by the institution."[2] In order to accomplish this assessment in an authentic and meaningful way, the Center for Educational Effectiveness worked closely with each department to create definitions of the Core Competencies and rubrics that were used for the measurement within each program; with their guidance, departments identified the natural opportunities in their programs' curriculum where such assessments could take place[3]. ArtCenter is fortunate that most programs had a capstone or senior level culminating project that could be used for the measurement, making the collection easier and more natural. A total of 325 "senior level" students were assessed in the calendar year 2015, 316 in 2017/2018, 296 in 2018/2019, and 326 in 2019/2020 across 11 undergraduate programs[4].

The definitions of the Core Competencies developed by the departments reflect how the competencies manifest themselves with each program. Given the wide range of majors at the college, this seemed to be the most authentic way to approach this assessment. Departments made great strides as they embarked on their measurement in 2015. Beyond 2015, many departments opted to tap into current assessment practices and align the Core Competencies with Program Learning Outcome assessment adding an additional layer to the already robust process.

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[1] 2013 Handbook of Accreditation, Page 29, 3: Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees, CFRs 1.2, 2.2-4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3

[2] 2013 Handbook of Accreditation, Page 30, 4: Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation, CFRs 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3

[3] "Department specific charts and information are available by request from the Center for Educational Effectiveness"

[4] The Interaction Design program was not included in the original analysis report as they did not have any graduates in 2015 and were not able to collect data

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Scale:

During the development of the program's rubrics, guidelines were provided including the use of a 1 - 4 point scale, with a 2.0 being defined as a "Passing[5]" score for all five competencies. In the few cases where decimal places were used by the programs, data was rounded based on basic mathematical standards.

SCALE[6]				
	1	2 = "Passing score"	3	4
	Ineffective	Progressing	Effective	Highly Effective
Definition of Score	Struggles to demonstrate practices described in key grading criteria.	Performs within the described key grading criteria. Showing some improvement over time.	Consistently demonstrates competency regarding the practices described in the key grading criteria.	Consistently innovative, integrated, nuanced, and sophisticated demonstration of elements in the key grading criteria.
Range for Scale	0.50-1.49	1.50-2.49	2.50-3.49	3.50-4.00

Benchmarks:

With feedback from the Department Chairs, the Provost, and the Executive Director of Academic Affairs, and the Director of Institutional Research, the following benchmarks were established for the College for the 2015 analysis. These benchmarks have been retained for comparison purposes.

The benchmarks are defined as the minimum percentage of students performing at or above a certain level for each competency. Each of the competencies plays out very differently at ArtCenter with varying expectations for each individual competency. For example, Written Communication and Oral Communication were both considered to be critical for graduating students. Therefore, there was a high expectation for the number of passing scores (95% of students scoring at least a 2).

Expectations:

WASC Competencies	Score		
	2 or higher	3 or higher	4
Written Communication	95%	75%	40%
Oral Communication	95%	75%	40%
Information Literacy	90%	70%	35%
Quantitative Reasoning	80%	60%	25%
Critical Thinking	95%	75%	40%

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[5] "Passing" score is defined as the acceptable level that a student graduating from ArtCenter is expected to perform at.
[6] Through the course of integrating the Program Learning Outcomes with the Core Competencies, some programs used a score of 0, for rare circumstances in which students failed to present any material for review.

Results[7] :

Written Communication	Score		
	2 or higher	**3 or higher**	**4**
2015	96.6%	75.4%	38.6%
2016/2017	Recalibration year		
2017/2018	95.9%	82.9%	52.5%
2018/2019	96.6%	87.2%	55.1%
2019/2020	98.2%	83.1%	55.5%

Oral Communication	Score		
	2 or higher	**3 or higher**	**4**
2015	93.5%	73.8%	36.9%
2016/2017	Recalibration year		
2017/2018	96.2%	82.0%	52.5%
2018/2019	96.6%	84.6%	54.7%
2019/2020	98.0%	84.1%	57.5%

Information Literacy	Score		
	2 or higher	**3 or higher**	**4**
2015	94.4%	75.5%	43.7%
2016/2017	Recalibration year		
2017/2018	98.4%	85.1%	49.1%
2018/2019	97.0%	85.6%	52.0%
2019/2020	98.8%	88.8%	57.8%

Quantitative Reasoning	Score		
	2 or higher	**3 or higher**	**4**
2015	96.3%	79.1%	46.2%
2016/2017	Recalibration year		
2017/2018	98.7%	89.6%	56.0%
2018/2019	98.0%	87.2%	55.4%
2019/2020	98.6%	88.7%	57.9%

Critical Thinking	Score		
	2 or higher	**3 or higher**	**4**
2015	96.6%	77.8%	41.8%
2016/2017	Recalibration year		
2017/2018	98.7%	88.3%	57.6%
2018/2019	98.3%	88.6%	55.2%
2019/2020	99.2%	90.8%	58.3%

- Students met all established benchmarks in 2017/2018, 2018/2019, and 2019/2020

Met Institutional Benchmark
Did Not Meet Institutional Benchmark

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[7] A recalibration of practices and data collection occurred in 2016/2017, no data was collected at that time

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Average Scores for the Core Competencies[5]:

		Average Score				
		Written Communication	**Oral Communication***	**Information Literacy**	**Quantitative Reasoning**	**Critical Thinking**
2015	**Average Score**	3.09	3.01	3.10	3.17	3.12
	Standard Deviation	0.83	0.89	0.90	0.85	0.84
2016/2017		Recalibration year				
2017/2018	**Average Score**	3.24	3.24	3.28	3.39	3.37
	Standard Deviation	0.85	0.85	0.75	0.71	0.72
2018/2019	**Average Score**	3.32	3.29	3.28	3.33	3.37
	Standard Deviation	0.80	0.82	0.78	0.75	0.72
2019/2020	**Average Score**	3.29	3.31	3.38	3.35	3.39
	Standard Deviation	0.78	0.78	0.70	0.73	0.69

General Outcomes:

The analysis of assessment data showed that ArtCenter students generally performed very well in all five of the Core Competencies. Students met or exceeded all of the benchmarks established by the College in the most current year (2019/2020 assessment cycle) [8]. The Core Competency that had been previously of concern in 2015, Oral Communication*, saw an increase in average score in the subsequent five years, and is of less of a concern than before.

Written Communication

The average score for Written Communication was a 3.29 (out of a 4.0), the lowest average score of the five Core Competencies. **All benchmarks set by the College for this competency were met:**

College benchmark for a score of 2 or higher (Passing) was 95%
- **98.2% of students achieved a score of 2 or higher**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

College benchmark for a score of 3 or higher was 75%
- **83.1% of students achieved a score of 3 or higher**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

College benchmark for a score of 4 was 40%
- **55.5% of students achieved a score of 4**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

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[8] All assessments took place at or near graduation

Oral Communication*

The average score for Oral Communication was a 3.31 (out of a 4.0). **All benchmarks set by the College for this competency were met:**

College benchmark for a score of 2 or higher (Passing) was 95%
- **98.0% of students achieved a score of 2 or higher**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

College benchmark for a score of 3 or higher was 75%
- **84.1 % of students achieved a score of 3 or higher**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

College benchmark for a score of 4 was 40%
- **57.5% of students achieved a score of 4**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

Information Literacy

The average score for Information Literacy was a 3.38 (out of a 4.0). **All benchmarks set by the College for this competency were met:**

College benchmark for a score of 2 or higher (Passing) was 90%
- **98.8% of students achieved a score of 2 or higher**; therefore, **the benchmark was met**

College benchmark for a score of 3 or higher was 70%
- **88.8% of students achieved a score of 3 or higher**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

College benchmark for a score of 4 was 35%
- **57.8% of students achieved a score of 4**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

Quantitative Reasoning

The average score for Quantitative Reasoning was 3.17 (out of a 4.0), the highest average score of the five Core Competencies. **All benchmarks set by the College for this core competency were met:**

College benchmark for a score of 2 or higher (Passing) was 80%
- **98.6% of students achieved a score of 2 or higher**; therefore, **the benchmark was met**

College benchmark for a score of 3 or higher was 60%
- **88.7% of students achieved a score of 3**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

College benchmark for a score of 4 was 25%
- **57.9% of students achieved a score of 4**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

Critical Thinking

The average score for Critical Thinking was 3.12 (out of a 4.0), the second highest average score of the five Core Competencies. **All benchmarks set by the College for this core competency were met:**

College benchmark for a score of 2 or higher (Passing) was 95%
- **99.2% of students achieved a score of 2 or higher**; therefore, **the benchmark was met**

 College benchmark for a score of 3 or higher was 75%
- **90.8% of students achieved a score of 3 or higher**; therefore, **the benchmark was met.**

College benchmark for a score of 4 was 40%
- **58.3% of students achieved a score of 4**; therefore, **the benchmark was met**

Recommendations

Over the last few years, departments have worked to implement improved practices (both formal and informal) in their programs, meant to specifically address Oral Communication. The adjustments to curriculum and programming impacted this competency, which resulted in increased scores at all level. ArtCenter continues to monitor Oral Communication scores closely given its significant international population and concerns with English Language learners.

ArtCenter continues to see some challenges with Written Communication. Even though the benchmarks were all met, this competency had the lowest average score. The Provost intends to work closely with the Department Chairs to address this at the major (program) level, and improve curricular and pedagogical practices and identify additional resources to address Written Communication of students in all undergraduate departments. It is increasingly important that the major departments collaborate with the Humanities & Sciences department to augment writing in the major curriculum at the upper terms, since much of the formal education with regards to Written Communication happens in the earlier terms.

Department level results vary widely across competencies. It recommended that the Provost and the department explore these areas more deeply with corresponding actions as needed.

Questions about the contents of this report may be directed to the Center for Educational Effectiveness (cee@artcenter.edu).