



Ethical Reasoning Institutional Assessment Report

2017-2018

Core Competency/Area	Ethics Focus Designation
Assessment Project Name	Ethical Reasoning Assessment Project
Assessment Cycle Year	2017-2018
Person Submitting Report	Yasmine Romero
Date Report Submitted	2/21/2021

Overview

The University of Hawai'i -- West O'ahu (UHWO) is committed to improving educational effectiveness through assessment projects that involve the work of faculty, staff, and students. Campus-wide assessment projects target WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) Core Competencies, and draw on the protocols, rubrics, and processes outlined by the AAC&U VALUE Institute and other like assessment organizations. Further, these projects take into account national standards and best practices not only for assessment, but also for evaluating how students meet WSCUC core competencies and what professional learning could support faculty and staff in strengthening their teaching praxes.

As a result of this commitment, the present report shares key findings, individual course assessments, and recommendations for the teaching of Contemporary Ethical Issues in 2017-2018. Contemporary Ethical Issues as an outcome aligns with our ILOs of Critical Thinking (ILO3) and Disciplinary Knowledge (ILO4) WSCUC core competencies of critical thinking.

Contemporary Ethical Issues

One of the WSCUC Core Competencies is Critical Thinking. WSCUC Criteria for Review (CFR) 2.2a specifies that undergraduate programs must “ensure the development of core competencies which includes critical thinking.” Further, CFR 2.2a requires that an institution explain learning outcomes in relation to those core competencies and demonstrate the extent to which those outcomes are achieved.



At UHWO Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) directly flow from the WSCUC Core Competencies. ILO 3: Critical Thinking is defined as the demonstration of critical skills by applying information to make well reasoned arguments and/or solve a problem. ILO 4: Disciplinary Knowledge includes ethical standards as part of entering scholarly and public conversations “associated with an academic discipline”. Teaching contemporary ethical issues, therefore, involves five hallmarks:

1. Contemporary ethical issues will be presented and studied in a manner that is fully integrated into the main course content
2. The disciplinary approach(es) used in the class will give students tools for the development of responsible deliberation and ethical judgment.
3. Students will achieve basic competency in analyzing and deliberating upon contemporary ethical issues to help them make ethically determined judgments.
4. The equivalent of one semester credit-hour or 30% of a 3-credit course will be devoted to contemporary ethical issues.
5. A minimum of 8 hours of class time will be spent in discussing contemporary ethical issues.

In Spring 2019, the Ethics Subcommittee (of the Faculty Senate’s General Education Committee) clarified these hallmarks through discussions with faculty; as a result, explanatory notes are available to faculty interested in applying for ethics focus designations. At the time of this assessment project, however, no such explanatory notes were available. These ILOs are seen in our general education outcomes, that is, contemporary ethical issues (GELO-8) at UHWO. However, the assessment of this GELO-8, and its associated ILOs, took place at both campus-wide and concentration/division-levels.

Assessment Cycle

Assessment cycles were impacted by changes in assessment positions, health-related leaves, and lack of time to prepare faculty for assessment projects, that is, explain, follow-up, and share processes and protocols: a small amount of reports were then available for this assessment cycle.

In 2016-2017, Dr. Monica LaBriola, Chair of the General Education Committee and Director of Assessment Dawne Bost assessed GELO-8 using data from ethics designated courses from Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. Director of Assessment Dawne Bost innovated a form that requested the following information: GELO, Course Name and Number, Assessment Methods, Expected Level of Achievement, Assessment Results, and Next Steps. Seven faculty members teaching ethics designated courses completed the form.

In 2017-2018, assessment coordinators from divisions across campus conducted discipline-specific assessment projects related to ethical reasoning. These assessment projects were



incredibly diversified, with some being planning-focused rather than evaluative, and others completed forms with a set of questions determined by their respective assessment coordinators.

Table 1: 2016-2017 Assessment Cycle

Date(s)	Activities	Description
February 2017	Group Establishment	Establishes the Division Assessment Lead Working Group (DALWG)
February-March 2017	Deliberate procedures	Decide on form and process/protocol as a group
3/11/2017	Request Data	Enlist participation of faculty to share their ethics course materials and samples via form
6/30/2017	Share Report (Draft 1)	First draft of report shared
2/26/2021	Synthesize Report (Draft 1 & 2)	Yasmine Romero creates a synthesis report, using established template, based on collected individual course and campus-wide assessments

Table 2: 2017-2018 Assessment Cycle

Date(s)	Activities	Description
Fall 2017 & Spring 2018	Establish Assessment Procedures	Introduce faculty to curriculum maps, assessment needs, and more
October-November 2018	Collect Data	Share assessment methods from survey to student writing samples. Ask faculty to share data.
Spring 2018	Share Report (Draft 1)	Share initial drafts of assessment reports
2/26/2021	Report (Draft 2)	Yasmine Romero creates report, using established template, based on collected individual course and campus-wide assessments



2016-2018 Faculty/Staff Contributing to Ethics Assessment Project

- Monica LaBriola, General Education Chair
- Allyson Gilles, Social Sciences
- Camonia Graham-Tutt, Public Administration
- Natalie Szymanski, Humanities
- Dawne Bost, Director of Assessment

Key Findings

Across the individual assessment reports and general education assessment report, faculty incorporated a diversity of assignments and methodologies to evaluate ethical reasoning in their courses from case studies to oral presentations. Faculty provided feedback using rubrics and/or written feedback. These practices supported the teaching of ethical reasoning such that writing samples met or exceeded expectations for ethical reasoning. Discrepancies emerged for online and face-to-face courses (see Public Administration's comprehensive report as an example on our assessment website) and the diversity of rubrics employed across and within divisions. These results, however, must be contextualized in the transition happening for the Assessment Committee, its directors, and its stakeholders from 2014-2016 taking one approach to 2017 taking another; this transition resulted in the exigency for **transparency, calibration, and professional learning**.

At the time of the original reports, there was a transition towards building a culture of assessment across campus. A clear, straightforward assessment cycle and process was needed, so that faculty could invest in assessment: the timeline, the stakes, and the importance of their contributions towards advancing student learning. Transparency, then, could also help the assessment coordinators, leads, and/or standing assessment committees work more efficiently with faculty consulted and data collected. In addition, methods for assessing ethical reasoning were incredibly divergent, with sometimes ambiguous and other times transparent processes and protocols. This diverse amalgamation of results has two major strengths: faculty can choose what strategies they employ to assess student writing; further, criteria can be contextualized for each discipline. However, these strengths can also be drawbacks in that nationwide best practices are not referenced; moreover, rationales for certain rubrics over others becomes complicated, and may or may not lead to miscommunication and/or misunderstanding of assessment findings as a whole. Thus, calibration means that divisions, faculty, and assessment coordinators should work towards building a general ethical reasoning rubric that incorporates not only local writing goals, but also national writing standards.

The general education assessment report, like the individual course assessment reports, indicate the importance of preparing faculty to incorporate ethical reasoning into their courses more. One of the first steps to support this suggestion is the meeting of the Ethics Subcommittee in Spring



2019 with stakeholders to discuss and clarify ethical reasoning hallmarks. A guide to the hallmarks with explanatory notes was the result of this forum. The next step could be to incorporate workshops and/or norming workgroups to further share ethical reasoning strategies and approaches across campus.

Individual Course Assessments

In the UHWO Assessment of General Education Learning Objectives, Contemporary Ethical Issues in 2016-2017, the major findings pointed to a need for more transparency in relation to assessment procedures. Faculty did not have ample time to share samples and/or prompts; as such, results cannot be generalized. However, transparency and professional learning in relation to teaching ethics in courses could prepare faculty for not only teaching more ethics designated courses, but also for re-evaluating and strengthening teaching practices and assignments. These concerns translated into the individual course assessments as discussed below.

Business Administration

Business Administration received accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs on May 15, 2017.

Creative Media

Creative Media was a part of the Humanities Division at this time; please refer to the Humanities report below for further information.

Education

Education has submitted consistent and regular reports for Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accreditation. Please refer to their website for more information.

Humanities

Humanities was establishing its own assessment cycles at the time of this project, and so the report for the Humanities was a suggested assessment cycle with assessment of ethical research and citation conventions, which could fall under ethical reasoning, was slated for 2018-2019; however, this assessment cycle was revised after changes in the Assessment Committee. Faculty in the Humanities also participated in the General Education Assessment Project, and so please refer to our comprehensive GELO-8 report on our assessment website.

Math, Natural, and Health Sciences

Math, Natural, and Health Sciences was a part of the Humanities Division at this time; please refer to the Humanities report above for further information.



Public Administration

For this assessment project, Public Administration faculty used the rubric from AACU to rate ethical reasoning. With the assessment lead supporting faculty at division meetings and professional convocation days, monthly updates regarding assessment of ethical reasoning involved gathering information related to course data. Across four concentrations, a total of 16 sessions were assessed. Based on the data, Public Administration saw the need for more focused work on “mechanics of ethics” and incorporating rubrics that involve the dimension of ethics into assignments. Please refer to our assessment website for Public Administrations’s comprehensive report.

Social Sciences

Social Sciences submitted a report at this time, but it focused on written assessment with ethical reasoning being assessed in some of the collected data, such as anthropology, economics, and political science. Findings and suggestions point to more focus on analytical thinking, appropriate use of evidence, and documentation strategies. These particular skills and/or strategies could fall under ethical reasoning. Other writing strategies such as organization and genre expectations were also in need of strengthening. Please refer to our assessment website for Social Science’s comprehensive report.

Recommendations

The academic year 2017-2018 brought to the attention of those contributing to assessment projects the need for assessment cycles at the program and campus level. While concentration-level assessment creates a foundation for program assessment, more focused program assessment is needed. In conclusion, this report suggests the following recommendations:

- Assessment processes and procedures need to be organized at both the Assessment Committee level and division level.
- Information regarding the learning outcome artifacts to be collected during a given semester needs to be provided to faculty prior to the beginning of the semester.
- Rubrics customized for UH West O’ahu will only contain a maximum of three categories allowing for up to an additional three categories specific to the given discipline.
- Training and professional learning on ethical reasoning in particular should be provided on a regular basis.