

Common Degree Outcomes Assessment Pilot Project Year 1 Report

Introduction

In their 2016 visit, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) evaluators noted the progress Macomb Community College has made in assessing student learning outcomes. In an effort to advance that progress, a team of Macomb Community College faculty, administrators, and staff developed a pilot project to assess one of Macomb's Common Degree Outcomes (CDOs). CDO 2 was selected by the team: "The graduate can demonstrate how to think competently."

On May 24th 2017, faculty volunteers joined the CDO Assessment Team for Assess Fest, a day-long event where student artifacts were assessed, using a common rubric, for evidence of competent thinking. The report that follows is a summary of the project and assessment results.

Results of CDO 2 Assessment Pilot

The pilot team chose to conduct a double-blind study to ensure the anonymity of both the faculty who taught the selected sections and the students whose artifacts were assessed. In the winter of 2017, there were 739 active courses that had CDO 2 checked on the Official Course Syllabus. Of those courses, there were 2,456 sections that were active at the time of the pilot. From that number:

- 1,173 course sections met the following two criteria
 - o *CDO 2 checked*
 - o *Three or more students enrolled with 44 or more earned credits*

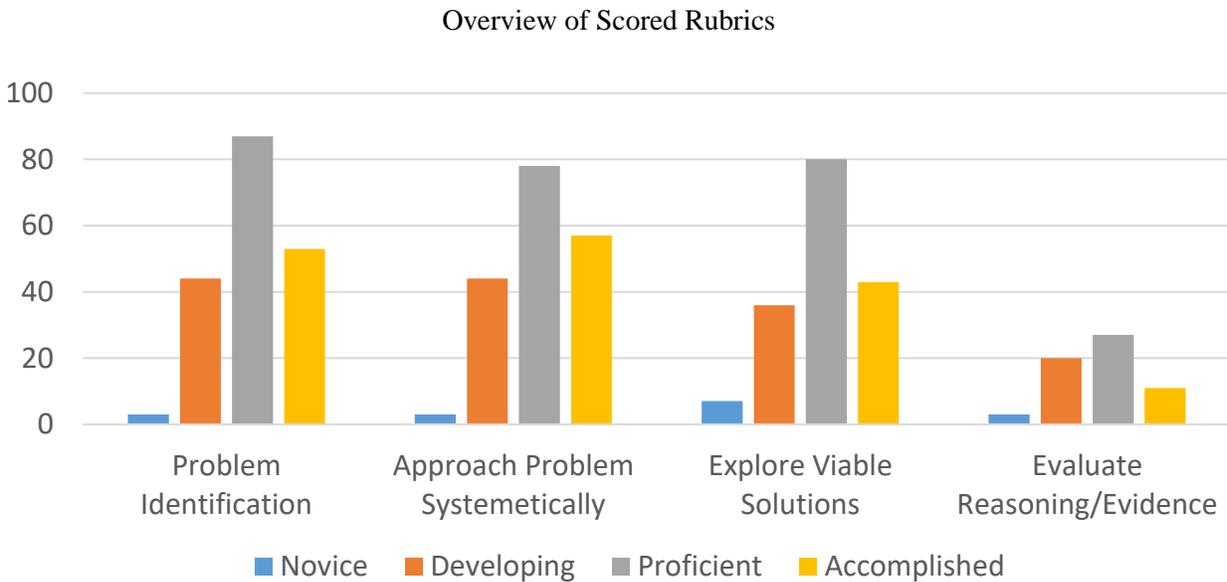
In order to have a sufficient sample of student artifacts for assessment, Institutional Research suggested the minimum number of sections that needed to be included in the pilot.

- 80 sections that met the criteria were randomly selected
 - o *42 sections from Arts & Sciences & 38 sections from Career Area*
 - o *43 full-time faculty & 37 part-time faculty*
 - o *36 sections from South, 39 sections from Center & 5 sections were Hybrid*

Of the 191 artifacts assessed and scored on one or more categories, the average artifact score was two, meaning, on average artifacts were deemed by the assessors to demonstrate a level of proficiency in competent thinking.

The Competent Thinking CDO assessment rubric had four categories to assess: 1) Problem Identification, 2) Systematic Approach/Methodology, 3) Exploration of Viable Solutions, and 4) Evaluation of Reasoning, Argumentation or Evidence. Each artifact was assessed on the four categories within a range of zero to three. A category score of zero indicated novice level; one indicated developing level; two indicated a proficient level; and three indicated accomplished. If an assessor believed a rubric category did not appropriately apply to the artifact, the category was not scored.

The table below displays the number of artifacts assessed in each category and the corresponding values for each performance level. Fewer assignments were submitted that required students to perform in the Evaluate Reasoning/Evidence category, thus resulting in fewer artifacts that were scored at that level.



This initial pilot provided valuable insight and information we can use to improve the next CDO assessment scheduled for winter 2018. In general, we learned that the project, process, resources, timelines, communication pieces, collection of and assessment of artifacts, and analysis, went well. Also, that the level of participation happily exceeded our expectations. Other insights we will be exploring as a team are:

- Numbering system and language of our rubric
- Importance of Artifact Cover sheets explanation of artifacts relationship to CDO
- Creating guidelines for submission of special types of artifacts (work completed in foreign language, group work, tests etc.)
- Determining assessor qualifications, if needed, for specialty content areas.
- Adding inter-rater reliability training time.
- Recommending review of current CDO language. While it is outside the scope of this assessment project, the team believes review would be broadly beneficial.

The next step is to disseminate the information to all stakeholders. A completed CDO action plan will be housed in the Assessment Resource Center on My Macomb. The Focus on Assessment website on Macomb.edu will be updated. Faculty and staff will be emailed an overview of the Year 1 project. In addition, the pilot team will present an overview of Year 1 at a variety of functions for staff and faculty.

Project Details

The Team

A stipend announcement was sent out to all faculty members in Fall 2016 inviting them to be a part of the College's first CDO Assessment Pilot Project. A team was selected, formed and consisted of cross disciplinary faculty, staff and administrators. Listed below are the team members:

Deborah Armstrong, Associate Director of Academic Development; Center for Teaching and Learning

Cindy Bily, Professor of English

Jillian Huot, Learning Outcomes Assessment Specialist; Center for Teaching and Learning

Mary Lou Kata, Director of Academic Development; Center for Teaching and Learning

Keith Nabozny, Professor of Information Technology

Stuart Scott, Professor of Humanities

Deirdre Syms, Director of Institutional Research

CDO Selection

One of the first decisions made by the team was the selection of one of the five CDO's to be assessed for this pilot project. In preparation of this decision, Academic Development and Institutional Research staff gathered appropriate institutional data in the summer of 2016 to assist in making this and other data-driven decisions throughout the project.

In order to better understand the potential number of sections that would meet the criteria, data was gathered from the Winter 2016 semester. Institutional Research identified how many course sections in Winter 2016 were being offered that had a specific CDO checked, and then how many of those sections had 3 or more students enrolled who had earned at least 44 credits. In addition, a report was prepared that listed the number of courses that had each individual CDO selected on the Official Course Syllabus.

After the pilot team was formed in September 2016, the collected data were reviewed. A broad discussion of each of the CDOs occurred, the potential number of sections that would meet the criteria for each CDO was considered and the CDO Assessment Team selected CDO 2, *Competent Thinking*, for this pilot assessment project.

Rubric Selection

Once CDO 2 was selected by the team to assess, there were several pre-existing "critical thinking" rubrics considered. Those included one of the Association of American College's & Universities VALUE rubrics and various rubrics from other colleges and universities. After using each rubric to assess a sample of student artifacts, the group discussed the merits of each rubric and the distinctions between critical thinking and competent thinking.

After discussion and review of the way in which CDO 2 and its subheadings are stated, the team adapted components of various rubrics to create one that was reflective of the components of *competent thinking* while aligning to Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956).

The rubric reflected in its criteria the specific aspects of competent thinking identified in CDO2:

- Identify problems
- Approach problems systematically (in an organized manner)
- Explore viable solutions to problems
- Evaluate the reasoning, arguments, and evidence offered by others

The rubric had four achievement levels with points assigned to assist with assessment and data analysis. Descriptions were written for all criteria at each achievement level and were aligned to a level of Bloom's Taxonomy:

- Novice: 0 points (*knowledge and comprehension*)
- Developing: 1 point (*application*)
- Proficient: 2 points (*analysis*)
- Accomplished: 3 points (*synthesis and evaluation*)

Course Section Selection

There were two criteria that were required for a course section to be included in the random sample for this CDO Assessment Pilot Project.

Each course section selected must:

- Have CDO 2 checked on the Official Course Syllabus
- Have 3 or more students in the course section who have earned 44 or more credits

For each course at Macomb, the CDOs that the faculty have selected are listed on the Official Course Syllabus. In this pilot project, those courses for which the faculty selected that the course work supported or lead to the development of CDO 2, *Competent Thinking*, were included.

The second criterion was based on the following Common Degree Outcomes Statement, "*Macomb Community College is committed to the continual improvement of teaching and learning. To reflect this commitment Common Degree Outcomes are provided to help establish a structured environment within which students will realize their educational goals. Therefore, associate degree recipients are expected to meet the following outcomes as appropriate to the student's program.*"

As the project pertains to the assessment of the extent to which associate degree recipients of Macomb Community College were achieving the Common Degree Outcomes, it was important to focus on the student population that was most likely to graduate. Therefore, it was determined by Institutional Research that students earning 44 or more credits are most likely to graduate and therefore would most likely become an associate degree recipient. Only the artifacts collected from the students earning 44 or more credits were assessed.

Lastly, for this initial assessment, the pilot team decided that to ensure all of the communications and processes were in place and to adequately inform the college community of the project, the resources, and how to participate, the 16 week timeline was needed. In upcoming assessments the goal will be to include all sections regardless of the duration of the course.

Communication Plan & CDO Assessment Resources

In an effort to share consistent, updated information about the pilot project to the college community, the team created a project communication plan and timeline for implementation. Within the academic year,

several emails were sent to all faculty members regarding the project and the team conducted workshops on Institutional Development Day.

In addition, electronic CDO assessment resources were created and consisted of a Project Overview, Frequently Asked Questions, a Checklist for Faculty Submitting Artifacts, the Artifact Cover Sheet, the Rubric, the college's Common Degree Outcomes, and examples of various types of artifacts that could be submitted.

Collection of Artifacts

All of the faculty members from the 80 randomly selected course sections were sent an email requesting their participation in this CDO Assessment Pilot Project. In the email, they were asked to identify student artifacts from one assignment within their chosen course section that most closely aligned to, or represented, competent thinking by the students. They were given detailed instructions to submit the student artifacts to Institutional Research, as well as a link to the CDO Assessment Resource Area for additional project information.

Each of the 80 faculty members also received an envelope through inter-office mail which included detailed instructions on how to submit all of the student artifacts from the selected course section. Within that envelope was placed a return envelope addressed to Institutional Research in which the faculty members could submit the student artifacts.

Upon receiving the artifacts, all identifying information was masked to ensure anonymity. The artifacts that did not meet the project criteria were disposed of and shredded by Institutional Research. The remaining artifacts that met the project criteria were placed into individual folders in preparation for the Assess Fest.

Out of the 80 course sections that were randomly selected, 29 envelopes were returned, thus resulting in a 36% faculty participation rate. Represented in those 29 envelopes were student artifacts from various course sections including the career area, general education, Center Campus, South Campus, hybrid courses, as well as both full time faculty and adjunct faculty.

Artifact Assessment - Assess Fest

The Assess Fest was an event which provided an opportunity for faculty members to work among their cross disciplinary colleagues in an effort to achieve one common goal: to examine student artifacts for evidence of competent thinking – the skill identified in Common Degree Outcome 2. In preparation for this event, an email was sent out to all faculty members, full time and adjunct, inviting them to volunteer their time and participate in this event.

This daylong event was split into three sessions: norming, assessing, and gathering feedback.

The group was led by a faculty member of the CDO Assessment Pilot Project team in a norming session. This session provided the group with an opportunity to practice using the common rubric and discuss any discrepancies in the scoring of a sample artifact. After the norming session concluded, the assessment of student artifacts began. Each attendee randomly received multiple folders which contained one student artifact, its corresponding artifact cover sheet, and any optional documentation. The attendee completed one rubric for each artifact.

Overall, there were twenty attendees at the event representing all college divisions and was considered a success by all members of the CDO Assessment Pilot Project team as all artifacts were assessed during this event. Positive and encouraging feedback was gathered from the event attendees.