**Planning to Assess WASC’s Five Competencies through the Majors**

**Overview**

This document is intended to help your major integrate assessment of WASC’s Five Core Competencies – *written communication, oral communication, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking* - into its annual PLO assessment activities.

Because the competencies constitute a core set of abilities that are essential to, but not sufficient for, the high quality, intellectual work expected of a bachelor’s degree graduate from the University of California, it is anticipated that many, if not all, of competencies are already being developed through the curriculum that supports your Program Learning Outcomes.[[1]](#footnote-1) Similarly, it is anticipated that students may already be engaged in work that can be used to assess these outcomes (or that they easily could be).[[2]](#footnote-2)

The steps outlined below, together with the supporting materials on the following pages, are intended to help your program (1) identify the Program Learning Outcome(s) that each competency supports (is embedded within) and (2) to put in place a plan to assess each competency as part of the normal work of assessing the PLO in coming years.

**Step I: Align competencies to existing PLOs.**

1. To align each competency to at least one PLO please complete the table on p. 2. This step will help identify which competencies are already addressed or could easily be addressed under the umbrella of an existing PLO. Appendix A provides faculty-developed, broadly accepted definitions of each competency. Additional details are available through the hyperlinks associated the each’s competency’s name.
2. Identify any questions or concerns that emerge from this process.

**Step II: Plan to assess the competencies as part of the assessment of the aligned PLO. To do so, please**

1. Identify at least one substantive source of direct evidence[[3]](#footnote-3) *for each competency* to be *collected at or near graduation*, recognizing that a rich source of evidence could support more than one PLO and competency.
2. Identify how student work will be archived for future use, with archiving initiated in AY2014-15.
3. identify the year each competency (and corresponding PLO) will be assessed, with the expectation that all five competencies must be assessed by spring 2018 for programs with a March PLO Report date (with four of the five completed by spring 2017), and fall 2018 for programs with an October PLO Report date (with four of the five completed by fall 2017).
4. Identify any questions or concerns that emerge from this process.

**Step III: Identify an annual timeline for competing assessment work.**

 This part of the plan is intended to help your program establish an annual rhythm for completing its annual assessment work.

**Step I: PLO and Competency Alignment**

Determine which competencies are already addressed or could easily be addressed under the umbrella of an existing PLO. To do this, review each PLO in relation to each Competency, placing a “X” in the Competency’s cell, if

1. Student development of the skills and knowledge outlined by the PLO involves the skills identified as a Competency, and/or
2. Students do or could employ (or demonstrate) the Competency as part of the work generated to assess achievement of the PLO.

It is likely that a Competency may be integral to student achievement and/or demonstration of more than one PLO. *Please indicate all such relationships*.

Appendix A provides faculty-developed, broadly accepted definitions of each Competency. Use the associated hyperlinks to access a more detailed description of each Competency.

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| **PLO** | **Written Communication** | **Oral****Communication** | **QR** | **Info Literacy** | **Critical Thinking** |
| *EXAMPLE:* Students will be able to take physical measurements in an experimental laboratory setting and analyze these results to draw conclusions about the physical system under investigation, including whether their data supports or refutes a given physical model. | X |  | X |  | X |
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**Please note any concerns, questions, or challenges that emerged from this process.**

**Part II: Develop/Refine Program Assessment Plan**

The Competencies will be assessed and reported as part of the assessment of the related Program Learning Outcome. In this light, the table that appears on the next page is a tool to support and/or to summarize PLO (and related Competency) assessment planning. As the program completes its plan, please keep in mind

1. **Evidence of student learning needs to be collected from students who are at or near to graduation**. WASC’s intention is to confirm that students demonstrably possess the skills and knowledge the program intends at the time they leave the university. This expectation recognizes that abilities atrophy without ongoing reinforcement and/or development, such that graduating seniors may perform more poorly than freshmen and sophomores. Evidence can be collected earlier in the curriculum if a program would like to examine student development of the abilities outlined by a PLO, but evidence of what students are able to do as they leave with their degrees is a priority. Toward this end, programs are encouraged to look to classes that enroll seniors (students with senior standing) as places for gathering evidence.
2. **Evidence should be an assignment (or a type of assignment) that all students in the major are asked to complete (even if only a sample is reviewed for the purpose of program assessment).**  In this way, the learning results will be representative of all students in the major (not just a subset who took a particular course). For majors without a capstone course or activity, evidence could be collected from more than one required course in the major, for example, using a common prompt.
3. **A rich source of evidence can often be used to assess more than one program learning outcome and Competency.** For example, a senior thesis, a substantial research paper, a culminating lab report, etc. could be used to assess one or more PLOs with the written communication, information literacy, and critical thinking competencies reflected in the program rubric(s).
4. **Really useful sources of evidence provide students with the time and incentives to do their best work.**  For example, an effective assignment might provide students with the time to plan and revise their work, and have a point value commensurate with the effort expected of students.
5. **Programs with March 1 annual reporting dates, should have assessed four of the five competencies by March 1, 2017, with the 5th completed by March 1, 2018. Programs with October 1 annual reporting dates, should have assessed four of the five competencies by October 1, 2017, with the 5th completed by October 1, 2018.** **Please confirm this in the assessment plan below.** These timelines are designed to meet [expectations established by WASC](http://assessment.ucmerced.edu/sites/assessment.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/alo_vpdue2_senate_re_wasc_core_competencies_12.4.2013_final.pdf). Programs should anticipate assessing at least one Competency as part of the next annual cycle. For programs with March 1 due dates, this work would appear in the report due March 1, 2015. For programs with an October 1 due date, this work would be reported on in October 1, 2015.

**Please indicate your program’s annual report submission date:**\_\_\_ October 1 \_\_\_ March 1

As you develop your plan, please keep in mind that programs with March 1 annual reporting dates, should have assessed four of the five competencies by March 1, 2017, with the 5th completed by March 1, 2018. Programs with October 1 annual reporting dates, should have assessed four of the five competencies by October 1, 2017, with the 5th completed by October 1, 2018. The small table below is intended to help track this.

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| **PLO** | **List the WASC Competency(ies)****Addressed** | **Evidence of Student Learning to be Collected At or Near Graduation.[[4]](#footnote-4)** | **From which course(s) will the direct evidence be gathered? What are the sources of indirect evidence?[[5]](#footnote-5)** | **Who will collect it?** | **How often is the evidence collected (not analyzed)?[[6]](#footnote-6)** | **Year Data Analyzed / Month & Year Summary Report Submitted** |
| *Example PLO from Previous Table* | *Quantitative Literacy**Critical Thinking* *Written Communication* | Direct: *Final technical report*  | *Physics 175 – required course* | *J. Johnson* | *Every course offering starting spring 2014* | *Analysis: Fall 2015**Report: March 2016* |
| Indirect: *SATAL Focus Group Data and Graduating Senior Survey* | *IPA**SATAL* | *FAO/School Coordinator* | *Survey – annually**Focus group – 1x (spring 2015)* |
| PLO 1 |  | Direct: |  |  |  |  |
|  | Indirect: |  |  |  |  |
| PLO 2 |  | Direct: |  |  |  |  |
|  | Indirect: |  |  |  |  |
| PLO 3 |  | Direct: |  |  |  |  |
|  | Indirect: |  |  |  |  |
| PLO 4 |  | Direct: |  |  |  |  |
|  | Indirect: |  |  |  |  |
| PLO 5 |  | Direct: |  |  |  |  |
|  | Indirect: |  |  |  |  |

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| **Competency** |  **Year Submit PLO Report**  |
| Written Communication |  |
| Oral Communication |  |
| Quantitative Reasoning |  |
| Information Literacy |  |
| Critical Thinking |  |

**Please note any concerns, questions, or challenges that emerged from this process.**

**Part III:** Timeline for completing annual PLO assessment culminating in submission of PLO Report.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Annual date by which FAO confirms that evidence has/is being collected.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Annual date by which assessment data analyzed and summarized.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Annual date by which findings discussed by program faculty and responding actions identified. The intention is that actions are identified so that they can be included in the PLO Report for record keeping purposes. Consider specifying what and where changes will be made and, as appropriate by whom, again for record keeping purposes.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Annual date by which report is submitted to Dean for review

**Appendix 1: Definitions of the Five Competencies, from the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics[[7]](#footnote-7),[[8]](#footnote-8) or other Resources**

Please click on the hyperlinked name for additional details for each Competency.

1. [**Written communication**](http://assessment.aas.duke.edu/documents/WrittenCommunication.pdf) **-** is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images.
2. [**Oral communication**](http://assessment.aas.duke.edu/documents/OralCommunication.pdf) **-** is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.
3. [**Quantitative reasoning**](http://assessment.aas.duke.edu/documents/QuantitativeLiteracy.pdf) **-** also known as Numeracy or Quantitative Literacy (QL) – is a "habit of mind," competency, and comfort in working with numerical data. Individuals with strong QL skills possess the ability to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations. They understand and can create sophisticated arguments supported by quantitative evidence and they can clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc., as appropriate).
4. [**Information literacy**](http://assessment.aas.duke.edu/documents/InformationLiteracy.pdf) **-** The ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand. (VALUE Rubric, American Library Association, 1989[[9]](#footnote-9))
5. [**Critical thinking**](http://assessment.aas.duke.edu/documents/CriticalThinking.pdf) **-** is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.
1. See Table 1 in the [proposal for addressing the competencies](http://assessment.ucmerced.edu/sites/assessment.ucmerced.edu/files/page/documents/alo_vpdue2_senate_re_wasc_core_competencies_12.4.2013_final.pdf) submitted to the Academic Senate in November 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. An exception may be quantitative reasoning in humanities majors. This could be the focus of a separate working group of humanities faculty. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ex. a major research paper, lab report, presentation, design project, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Preferably students with senior standing. See explanation, Part II, bullet 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ex. The course from which the assignment is collected, the office that supplies certain information, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ex. Every time class is offered? At the end of every academic year (ex. exit survey)? For evidence gathered through course assignments, programs should consider collecting evidence every time the class is offered. This step is intended to support collection of student work only. It is separate from analysis, which takes place once a five year cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.aacu.org/VALUE/rubrics/index_p.cfm?CFID=41742223&CFTOKEN=91633483> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Note that each VALUE Rubric states the following:*The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/informationliteracycompetency#ildef> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)